VENUS

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One
World
Nearer
Paradise?

By ARTHUR ELLIOTT PATERSON

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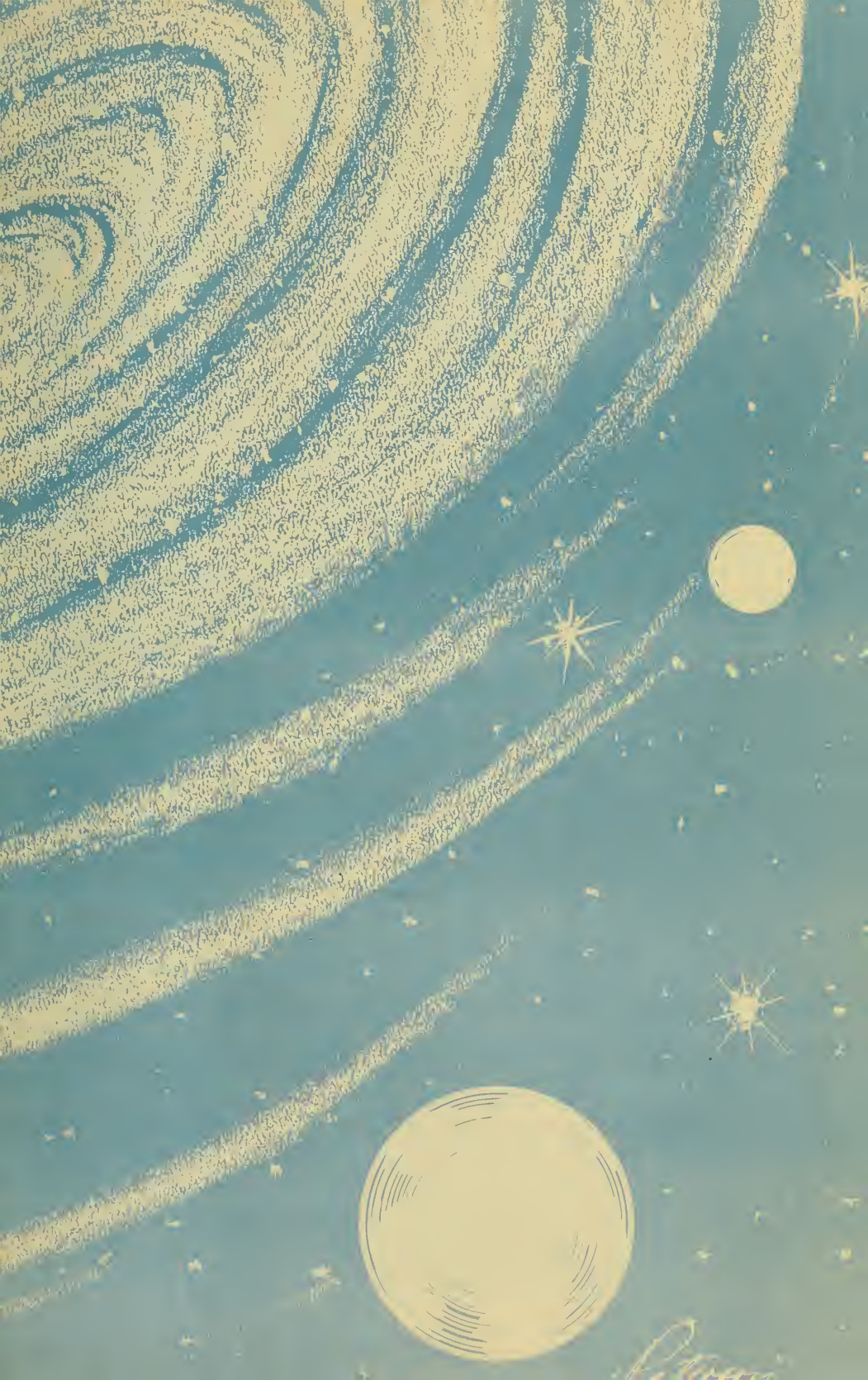

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"They were impelled at length to go out beyond the sky because they believed that there must be a place somewhere in the universe where life is lived more nearly as it could be and should be."

VENUS

One World Nearer Paradise?

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One World Nearer Paradise?

ARTHUR ELLIOTT PATERSON

with illustrations by

CLAYTON L. TRAVIS

TRAVERSITY PRESS
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This story of the lustrous planet Venus, in the star-strewn skies where teeming truth, beauty, and love build worlds in sunlight and shadow, is dedicated by the author with heartfelt appreciation to Harriet, his understanding wife, to Marion D'Amicis, his ideal of young womanhood in the space age, and to every man and woman who looks for a new heaven and a new earth.

6/29/62

Every character included in this story is fictitious, and any resemblance in description or in name, to actual persons living now or formerly, is purely fortuitous.

Acknowledgment is made by the author to the many whose publications have preceded the present volume, who have, in the fields of astronomy and of mathematics, and in the literature of aerospace travel, contributed to the present writer's conceptions regarding space exploration and the question of intelligent beings in the outer universe. The author acknowledges specifically his indebtedness to R.C.A. Victor, Record Division, for its realistic and impressive description of the illimitably stupendous cosmos, in the record, "Exploring the Unknown" (L.P.M. 1025).

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"In respect to their mien, also, the two Venusian ladies were striking opposites." 39

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"An Instant, and his hands were upon her shoulders." . 125

WASHINGTON, Dec. 16 (UPI)—The world is in for such a shock if stars are inhabited that earthly civilization might even collapse.

This warning was contained in a research report handed to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) with the recommendation that earthlings should prepare themselves mentally for the eventuality.

The report, prepared by the Brookings Institute, said "While the discovery of intelligent life in other parts of the universe is not likely in the immediate future, it could nevertheless happen at any time."

Discovery of intelligent beings on other planets could lead to an all-out space effort by earth to contact them, or it could lead to sweeping changes or even the downfall of civilization, the report said.

Even on earth, it added, "Societies sure of their own place . . . have disintegrated when confronted by a superior society, and others have survived even though changed."

"Clearly, the better we can come to understand the factors involved in responding to such crises the better prepared we may be."

The 190-page report, prepared at a cost of $96,000, was for NASA's committee on long-range studies. The authors, headed by Donald N. Michael, also recommended further study of other space activities . . .

—UP International, by Darrell Garwood,
The Middletown (Conn.) Press,
Dec. 16, 1960

CHAPTER I

Departure From Earth

The spring of 1949 (or 8 B.R., before the age of rockets) had arrived in North Dakota badlands. It was early morning —very early. The stars still shone. On the eastern horizon the slightly perceptible hue of the coming dawn.

From a broad valley to the northwest the Missouri came winding and shifting, not yet visible in the lingering darkness, flowing persistently eastward and southward.

In the clear sky, above all the other heavenly bodies in brilliancy, blazed the Lustrous Planet Venus.

A queer sight loomed, under the duskiness of the early hour, in this remote spot on the prairie's edge some ninety miles north of Bismarck. It was off to the left from the main trail leading from Garrison to Elbowoods. No human inhabitant lived for miles about. The nearest settlement was the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation, twenty miles up the river. This barren and scraggy setting must have been chosen by some one wishing to avoid discovery during the building of the great round thing that rested there.

In a coulee hidden by a butte, some rods away from a shack of log and frame construction—perhaps twenty by thirty feet of floor space—rested a gigantic sphere.

This sphere was some twenty-four feet in diameter. It towered up, gray and eery, and glinted a little in the early light. It was constructed of some bright metal. In its surface at regular intervals were large windows, flush with the rest of the globe. There were broad white stripes, highly polished, such as might be calculated to reflect both light and heat, running horizontally around the entire craft. Its windows were equipped with what seemed to be exterior roller curtains of metallic whiteness, some of them at the moment partly rolled down. In a circle on its outer surface, about three feet above the ground as the ball rested upon the center of an anchorage, was a set of rings. By these rings the craft was securely anchored with rope fastenings to a similar set

of rings set around the edge of a circular platform of concrete. The diameter of the platform was slightly larger than that of the craft which rested upon it.

That the contrivance was fashioned to accommodate human beings, as the presence of windows suggested, was further indicated by a door built into its side conveniently above the ground, with a set of steps in front of it just now. A closely encircling antenna was mounted on its surface on short insulating supports, in spiral form, relieving the otherwise smooth outside of the craft. And at two diametrically opposite points located horizontally on the shell as it rested there, two knob-like prominences were noticeable. One could guess that they concealed the ends of shafts and bearing surfaces upon which an inner shell or sphere could ride.

The shack fronted to the west, facing the river beyond the benchlands. To the south of the building a hundred feet or so, some previous occupant of the premises had planted and cultivated a windbreak and screen of cottonwood and other growth.

Now from the building came a man. He was in his late twenties. He was well built, of medium height, sandy complexion and a tawny head of hair, abundant and curly but showing a definite part. He carried a large carton in his arms, over the top of which he gazed intently toward the great ball, as he hurried toward it. His eyes, gray and wideset, were alight with purpose. He wore a khaki-colored flannel shirt, and trousers that matched.

Presently the door on the underside of the ball-shaped vehicle started to open—for it *was,* indeed, a space ship, of design and appearance never before that time produced, nor since. Incomparably beautiful was this celestial ship, in the stark perfection of its global form.

As the door of the ship opened wider, a man and a woman emerged. The man was dark haired but of light skin. He had large, brown eyes. He was wide-browed, his features were fine and scholarly. He might be in his early thirties. The woman was blonde and petite, of a healthy, clear complexion. Her cheek bones were rather high, and widely

spaced. Her facial lines were delicately moulded, above exquisite lips and a shapely chin. In movement and manner she was vivacious, and smiling. These were Mr. and Mrs. Field. He was the astronomer of the expedition which was apparently about to begin.

James Wolcott, the man carrying the package to the ship, headed the party. The great craft, bearing on its side the name *Radiokin,* represented both his personal fortune and his years of study and experimentation in Europe and America, in aeronautical mechanics. This however, was to be more than an aeronautical voyage; it would be one out into the solar system, to Venus.

Now two others, wearing dark overalls, emerged from the craft and descended to the platform. Wolcott had reached the ship and he addressed them. "Whitney," he said, "please bring those trees now, and your other things. And you, Austin, will perhaps help Mrs. Field with those books that are on the table in the cabin, also the basket of stuff we left on the floor."

Austin, a short, stout figure, was a skilled mechanic. Whitney, taller and blond, was a biologist, also interested in anthropology, whom Wolcott had interested in stratospheric investigations and finally persuaded to join the other four for the voyage into space.

These five explorers, now set for outer regions distant from the earth, were more than curious scientists. Intrepid and courageous as individuals, they were like many restless men and women of our day, a day in which man, at length, has explored his globe from pole to pole, on the ground and in the air and under the water, yet is not satisfied. They felt that the reason for worldwide fear and frustration in the midst of 20th century power and abundance, lay in false goals, false incentives, inadequate methods, and in the cramping of spirit in human affairs. And they were impelled at length to go out beyond the sky because they believed that there must be a place somewhere in the universe where life is lived more nearly as it could be and should be. Could they find something like that on the planet Venus?

Their space ship had been built so as to utilize rather than to overcome gravitation. It was not a rocket. Rockets were to become common; but, as we have said, this was in the Before Rockets era; later would come the culmination of the Rockets era, and the real beginning of the Nucleartronic Age. This globular ship was the first to incorporate nucleartronic forces rather than the energies of combustion. Its silently powerful electrons took over when its builder abandoned the rocketry method.

The ship was a product of generations of mathematicians, researchists and electronic engineers. It contained reacting combinations of matter so arranged and brought together that a single component of the natural forces of molecular, atomic, nuclear and electronic fields, could be formed. Its builder knew that electrons were polarized, probably on account of their spinning motion; but it had not been found possible, until the secret construction of this ship, the *Radiokin,* to orient and control freely spinning electrons, and to arrange and coordinate their kinetic energy, collectively, in any one direction. Now, this had been done. The energy and its resultant force, the latter of a magnetic or gravitational nature, acted directly within and upon the ship. This force, as to the shape of its field and the direction of its pull, was manually controlled. The vehicle moved, under the hand of the operator, in any direction desired with relation to the component and total masses and regions of energy which go to make up the universe.

There had been a problem of shielding the astronauts now about to set out, from the intense penetration of any high-energy particles in the relatively free and empty outer space — which were, as Whitney expressed it, "God's own bar against the travel of the unworthy throughout and across His domain." This had been solved.

This space ship, then, created and utilized its own gravitation, as the inseparable component of circular motion in the micronic micronic (u u) order of the universe. Its gravitational energy, once acquired, became free energy. Therefore the craft needed no fuel, once it became conditioned to go; for space itself was its prime energy.

Wolcott had explained to Whitney and the Fields, however, that the ship indeed contained an engine, a "plasma gun", which, he said, would in the future become known as the "plasma motor."

At last all the loading of instruments, conveniences, and supplies was completed. The Fields first entered the great shining globe, followed by Austin.

Wolcott and Whitney entered last. As they ascended to the side of the craft and got to the open entrance, Whitney felt of the door's inner lining.

"Glad I am," said Whitney, "that you insulated the interior from the cosmic ray. Had you not done this, I would not have gone with you." The young biologist was a man of precaution.

Presently all were within. The door was shut and fastened. The anchor ropes had been taken away. The occupants of the space ship went to the windows for what might well be, they thought, their last look upon the good earth.

Then . . .

The *Radiokin* rose without shock or vibration, more quietly and gradually increasing its speed than any elevator in the shaft of a sky-scraper.

The take-off was well before sunrise, and Venus was still a great blaze of splendor above the clear air for which the Dakotas are so well known.

Its crew guided the course of the *Radiokin* by sighting on the planet, and kept their course checked by the principles of astronomical navigation, with mathematical precision.

From nothing the speed of the ship increased, until, when the altimeter showed that the voyagers were fifty miles above the earth's surface, they were rising from it at the rate of 200 miles an hour. They did not venture to attempt a higher speed yet. They had been going upward for something over twenty minutes. The air, thin though it was, was blowing downwards, apparently, with tremendous effect, at that speed.

At this point Wolcott gave a sudden start, as if he had forgotten something important. He turned to Austin, sitting beside him at the controls.

"Time to bring in the polarizers," he said.

Austin reached over to the right side of the panel and moved the rubber handle of a circular switch.

"How much?" he asked.

"Seventy-five should be enough," replied the Pilot.

The ship was equipped to repel and deflect any wandering missiles in the outer regions, often tiny, perhaps an ounce or two at most but traveling with tremendous speed, — meteors which otherwise could puncture and destroy the craft and bring death in the outer airless space to all within it. Were it not for the polarizers the *Radiokin* might be struck by one or by a shower of these fragmentary particles, remains of comets or portions of the wreckage of celestial bodies. However, the atomically energized polarizing system endowed the outer shell of the ship with properties of repulsion effective ten seconds (that is, 500 miles) away. This repelling power was capable of diverting such flying material objects with increasing power to turn them aside as they neared the ship. Wolcott had asked Austin, at this point, to have this protective system switched on.

The distance of the planet Venus from the Earth at the time of the *Radiokin's* departure for it, was roughly 26,000,000 miles. Field, the astronomer, had prepared the party for an outward voyage of about six hours. Theoretically, so far as its power went, this new type of vehicle which carried Wolcott and his associates, was capable of traveling through the interplanetary ether, or space, with the speed of light. Practically, however, as Einstein showed, that would not be possible, for at that speed they would no longer have physical — material — human bodies. They and their craft would be transformed into light, and become incorporated into the non-material Universal Energy.

At the theoretical but manifestly impossible speed of light, after overcoming its inertia at the start and after clearing the atmosphere of the earth, the ship on its trip to Venus would have taken only an interval of something like two or three minutes. And had the adventurers in the *Radiokin* turned on all their available atomic energy at the starting

of the excursion into the sky, the ship would have shot upwards so suddenly and with such swiftness that the hearts of all aboard would have ceased to beat, and their nervous systems would have ceased to function from the shock of it. The five would have died more quickly than a stroke of apoplexy could kill. And before the ship had reached an altitude of a hundred miles it would have become a molten, glowing mass, from the friction generated against its sides by the atmosphere.

The light of the dawn now breaking over the eastern curve of the earth began to threaten for a time any continuing vision of Venus, itself in the eastern sky. The ship maintained an upward motion of 200 miles an hour until, after another fifteen minutes had passed, the "wind" had subsided. What had happened was that the *Radiokin* had left the earth's atmosphere. There was, at 100 miles above the ground, so little air that it ceased to register against the blades of the anemometer sufficiently to rotate them. The travelers knew, then, that they could with safety gradually increase their speed to the fabulous and unearthly degree which, they believed, their radiokinetic ship could reach.

After a little, the glare of the sun's light began to interfere less and less with the explorers' view of the planet Venus. Atmospheric refraction diminished. The interstellar and interplanetary spaces grew darker.

Wolcott had been giving directions to Austin, directions based on calculations he was making from charts spread out before him.

Suddenly Wolcott heard a gasp of terror. It had come from Mrs. Field, emotionally overcome by the uncanny unearthliness of the celestial regions.

Her husband was everything she held dearest in the world. She would listen to nothing, at the time the expedition was planned, but that she should go with him, Wolcott, Austin, and Whitney in the *Radiokin,* if her husband were to go. Finally, she, too, had become enthusiasic about the expedition.

But now! Mrs. Field had been watching the increasing wierdness of the unworldly scene—watching these changing

skies never seen before, either in appearance or content, by human eyes. She pressed close to her husband. Her eyes, ordinarily hazel and handsome, now were pallid with fear. Before her she gazed, still and rigid, at the awesome firmament; to her, awful in its infinite magnificence, in its brilliancies beyond number, against its background, now, of empty darkness. Presently she buried her face on her husband's breast and cried softly.

No more was the light from sun or stars diffused by atmospheric particles, as we know it on earth. But each heavenly body stood out against a jet black sky, each in its own isolated and heightened beauty. The murkiness which partially obscures the celestial radiance as one looks upon it through the atmospheric envelope of Earth, was no more.

The empyreal coloring of the material universe burst upon the watchers at the windows of the *Radiokin,* in its full purity. This experience which now came upon them was like existence in another plane of being. The ship, with its imprisoned air and its human passengers, was the only suggestion of the earthly anywhere about them in all creation. Even within the ship, everything was different — and a sort of shadowless light bathed all objects contained in it.

To the left, as the ship then moved, the blazing sun shone out of black sky, hard and hot. But far over to the right shone at the same time the strangely brilliant disc of the moon, resplendent, against the same background of perfectly black sky. Thousands of sparkling star worlds pierced the same all-pervading background of black, in ubiquitous splendour. And below — there was still such a thing as "below" — below, shutting out all else over a sector of a seemingly limitless circle — shone and glistened in tints of white and gray and blue and yellow, a weird, unearthly, yet glorified Earth.

The occupants of the *Radiokin,* while unable to gaze with unprotected eyes upon the sun for its dazzling brightness, could easily look toward points very near to it in their line of vision, for there was only the blackness of the universal void up to the very edges of its blazing circle.

As further time passed, the members of the party all became more composed in mind. The situation became one of confidence — almost — and of ever increasing interest. They could now reflect with some calmness upon that which met their unaccustomed vision. Nebulae became noticeable in remote regions of the visible universe — great loose waves of luminous lace, they looked like — and patches of soft pure white and gold that must have been countless years away.

As interstellar travelers these five were actually beginning to think and feel about distances not in terms of miles, but in terms of time, in which way of reckoning, a point one year away is at such a distance that it would take an object, traveling with the speed of light, one year to reach it.

These first few glimpses from the windows of the *Radiokin* afforded the five within her a new outlook upon — life — the world they had left behind them. They shot back in their understanding, to the beginning of life on earth — *"and darkness was upon the face of the deep"* — darkness of eternal space — there it was before them — not in Scripture — but before their very eyes — enwrapping the earth — enwrapping even the sun and the moon — the darkness of the uncreated.

"A man named Valentine, trying to explain what we mean by the word 'God'," ventured Wolcott, "once said that 'The pictures of God may hang upon the unsubstantial walls of the mind's self-built habitation, but the *fact* of God is embedded in the wide reality beneath and beyond'."

"And beyond," murmured Mrs. Field, "and beneath, and around — in man, mind and heart, yes, but possibly not in earth-man alone — perhaps in some strange Venus folk God would also dwell, perhaps more largely, more effectually, in some ways. Venus folk! Shall we find such beings there?"

CHAPTER II

Out in the Void

The *Radiokin* was now some hundreds of miles "above" the earth. Until that day the greatest distance above the earth which human beings had ever reached had been between thirteen and fourteen miles, reached by Anderson and Stevens in 1935, in a balloon.

Less than an hour had passed since the ship had left the earth's surface. But already the physical sensations of its passengers were giving them concern. They had anticipated physical and nervous disturbance as they gradually became free from the gravitation of the earth. Their actual feelings, however, as now first experienced, were none the less terrifying notwithstanding the fact that they had known these sensations would surge through them.

Soon after the first hour in the sky the five were all as uncertain on their feet as babies a year old. They seemed to become so light that they could scarcely trust themselves to walk across the floor of the cabin in the *Radiokin.* The only gravitational pull upon their bodies sufficiently great to give frictional hold to their feet upon the carpet, was that afforded by the electronic reservoir located between the floor and the outer shell of the miniature planetoid within which they were shooting silently through the blackness toward the distantly blazing light of Venus.

The physiological effects also began to make themselves felt. But for the oxygen which they carried, they would have lost consciousness. Breathing was not difficult, however. Nevertheless, nausea gave them concern, and made their fear more acute.

Mrs. Field retired to the stateroom occupied by herself and her husband. Whitney the biologist also retired to his room, since there was nothing he could do to help navigate the ship, and no observation for him to make in the midst of this black and lifeless universal void. Both, however, beheld from their berths, through the ample windows, the glorious

lights of the firmament through which they were now going at an unfelt speed of many hundreds of miles an hour and of constantly accelerating swiftness.

Wolcott could not think of going off duty. Austin and he remained continuously at the controls in the Pilot's Cabin. The forward part of this room contained the necessary control levers and instrument boards. The after part, containing Wolcott's bed and his charting table, was in use now by one of them, now by the other. When Wolcott could no longer stand the strain, Austin would rise from the bed where he had been resting, propped up against pillows and gazing in awe at the cosmic spectacle on that side of the ship. He would then relieve Wolcott. Wolcott would rest perhaps a half-hour. Then Austin would do the same. The strain, in the case of both of them, was more psychological than physical.

Mr. Field, who was enduring the unearthly experience very well, was alternately going to the side of his brave but frightened wife, and returning to the general quarters, or main cabin, to make and record observations. This he did with ever increasing excitement, pouring over his work at the big table in the center of the main cabin. For a moment he would stand tense at one of the windows, then run to the large white sheet of cardboard he had on this table. On this sheet he pencilled circles and stars, roughly drew orbits and jotted brief notes, memoranda, and questions occasioned by the new astronomical standpoints which he progressively achieved.

In spite of the six electronic heaters — a smaller one in each of the four staterooms, and two large ones in the main cabin — the *Radiokin* at the end of the fourth hour out from Earth, had acquired a perceptible chilliness within.

At this point, however, Wolcott brought in additional warmth from the heat sink with which the craft was equipped. This device cooled the sun-heated half of the outer shell and transferred some of its heat to the opposite half of the outer sphere. This seemed to be preserving the outer surface of the ship intact. There was sufficient sun-derived heat left over, after being conducted away from the sun-bombarded

half to the other, to keep the interior of the *Radiokin* comfortable.

Wolcott believed that the ship would prove to be able to be superior to any heat barrier or to any cold barrier which it would have to encounter on this trip to Venus.

Be that as it might, the thermometer which had been mounted on the outside of the globe facing the sun now gave a reading of 160 degrees Fahrenheit, while a similar instrument on the opposite side of the ship was seen to read minus 110 degrees. This great difference in the temperature conditions just outside the two halves of the outer shell, meant great molecular strain. The five passengers became very anxious lest a fault develop in the steel. They knew that if there were any considerable vibration aboard ship out there in space under these conditions of unequal temperatures, their ship would be likely to burst like a bubble. They knew that at the low temperatures to which an interplanetary ship is subjected on the side away from the warming rays of the sun, the materials used in her construction become brittle as glass. And they knew that the actual space temperatures were both higher and lower than the instrument readings indicated.

They realized, too, that they were still taking chances with the meteorites. One of these fragments, hard and cold and traveling far more swiftly than any bullet, could shatter the frail globe into splinters, and the internal air pressure of fifteen pounds to the square inch would complete its destruction.

Mrs. Field remembered experiments she had once seen performed, in which a piece of lead rang like a bell, so hard and brittle was it at 310 degrees below zero. She had seen a soft rubber tubing crash and tinkle like glassware, at this temperature, from the shock of being thrown against a wall, and had seen iron when cooled to the temperature of outer space break like a window pane.

She became more fearful as these thoughts went through her mind and she urged her husband and the others to move with gentle steps to avoid vibration. The five were shooting

across space in a bubble, half of its periphery hot, half of it, in the outer shell especially, unbelievably frozen.

There was actually, however, scarcely a quiver all through the *Radiokin.* Its quiet radiokinetic mass, containing no rotating parts, caused not even the slightest sound as it pulled or pushed, like a huge and powerful magnet, in the direction toward which the sum total of its component nuclear energies was directed by the controls in the hands of Wolcott or Austin.

At one time, when the party was about three hours out from the earth, Mrs. Field started to enter the main cabin from her own, unnoticed by the others.

Suddenly the men heard her scream, and they all turned at once toward the sound.

There she was, Alma Field, floating in the air of the cabin, slowly rising bodily, some four feet or more above the floor, her body almost parallel with it, her face downward. Her features were expressive of terror. Her feet and lower limbs moved helplessly in the air.

Professor Field, first to move, tried to get up from his charts at the table to reach his wife. But his own feet found no purchase until he happened to kick one of them hard against the floor beneath his chair.

Thereupon, up into the air went Field's own body.

Only by protecting his head with his hands was Field able to avoid a head injury in a bang against the cabin top.

The others found themselves helpless to initiate or guide any movements about the cabin space.

Wolcott had been at the controls, Austin beside him. Austin had only just at that time taken the co-pilot's seat.

Now, Wolcott looked wildly at a certain lever arm on the panel nearby, and saw that this lever had been pulled down, through an arc of a half-circle from its former setting, nearly to zero!

Thus the mystery of what had happened, was solved. The lever controlled the intensity of the internal gravitational pull of an electronic device, underneath the cabin floor, upon all objects within the cabin.

Immediately — but moving it very slowly — Wolcott

pushed the arm back, upwards. He had to hold himself in place with the other hand to do even this. And as he did so the queer feeling of weightlessness lessened. His body began to feel normally "heavy" again. He sat more securely.

By this time Alma Field, although still partly suspended, was touching the floor and facing it. Her husband was descending, feet first, and more rapidly, toward the carpet.

It was all over in probably less than a minute. But the memory of it and the increasing fun the five got out of the experience as time went on, was to last to the end of the voyage. As they seriously talked it over now, however, the explanation of it dawned upon them. The lower edge of Austin's jacket had caught against a projecting knob on the lever; and unknown to him and unseen by Wolcott, he had, in taking his seat, pulled it down to its lowest point — and reduced to almost nothing at all the self-contained gravitationally polarized force of the craft's under-floor gravity unit. Presto! Everything had gone up in the air for the moment!

As the prodigious but unfelt speed increased, the positions of the so-called fixed stars became somewhat changed. As the *Radiokin* steadily shot toward the Bright Planet, it kept going faster and faster. But there was no sense of motion. Only Field, from time to time, could tell his companions how — and how rapidly — the ship was changing its location in the universe and increasing its distance from the dwindling and dimming, tho still brilliantly sun-lighted, world they had left.

After three and one-half hours, Venus showed bigger and brighter than Earth. Its globe kept growing in beauty and size. When the space travelers were five hours out from the earth, Venus lay spread out in space, seemingly hanging there in gigantic repose. They were coming into its own ecliptic. Slowly, ever so slowly, the Great Thing grew. Vast expanses of silvery light, and shadowy lines without pattern, spread across it.

The observers in the *Radiokin* could not discern land or water as such. The Venusian surface seemed to possess a settled sameness, like that of a cloud-patterned electric globe

illuminated from within. It became dazzling in its brilliance.

The Fields and Whitney were now constantly at the window of the main cabin just outside the Pilot's room. Austin and Wolcott watched, and guided the silvery ship onward through the upper layers of the outer envelope. The ship itself was shining, partly with light from the sun and partly with sunlight reflected from Venus.

The five fellow voyagers seemed to desire to remain as close together as they could. They felt a common sentiment. They seemed, in their own minds, to have become an entire race. The creation of mankind seemed summed up in them and in them alone — with all its achievements since it first evolved from the mind of God and emerged from the womb of Nature. They seemed in themselves to personify all mankind, from its inception, through its struggles with itself in its ignorance and weakness, and in its efforts to discover Universal Law and the requirements of that Law.

They also felt a sense of helplessness at their approach to a new and unfamiliar world now rapidly coming up to meet them. Dread of the unknown glared into their hearts from the mysterious gleam of the vaporous surface materializing out of empty space beneath them.

For now again, as at the beginning of the voyage when they rose from the earth, they began to have a consciousness of that which is "beneath," as opposed to that which is "above." Their bodies were getting heavier again. This was caused by the increasing gravitational attraction of the planet.

The space which enveloped the ship more immediately now began to give hint of some material substances suspended in minute particles within it. For it had lost the intense blackness of the spatial ocean; and before the end of the fourth hour Wolcott instructed Austin to greatly reduce the speed. (Wolcott estimated that for the duration of one minute during the third hour the ship had attained a movement of 100,000 miles a second — that it had traveled across space for a distance of 6,000,000 miles approaching the speed of light.)

After that brief period of nigh unbelievable speed and of space-time accommodation to which the explorers within

the ship were subjected—albeit unconsciously—as gradually as the ship had been worked *up* to this rate of motion, unnatural, to be sure, to any material body in the heavens—*so*, gradually, it was progressively slackened, in its movement.

The average speed of the ship from the outer edge of the earth's atmosphere to the outer edge of the atmosphere of Venus was something over 100,000 miles a minute.

After the first few minutes of that fifth hour of the voyage, Field, looking down upon the planet through his telescope, announced that the vaporous nature of the shining envelope was now unmistakably discernible. He could even see separable areas of cloud patches, of great extent.

Each in turn looked at the giant planetary jewel, set, it appeared, nearly everywhere upon the surface with shining rounded facets, its entire global mass suspended, as it were, in the dark background of primeval space.

The passengers of the *Radiokin* were looking upon the silver lining of the life-giving Venusian storm clouds, which from below on the land surface of the planet were undoubtedly dull and heavy and dark. The ship was, presently, not more than 300 miles above Venusian soil.

Below them was a planet which the five from the earth knew not. Somewhere, there below, was ground upon which no creature of Earth had ever placed foot. Again the five became apprehensive. And they felt drawn together anew by their common fear of the unknown.

"What sort of land will there be down there?" asked Mrs. Field, in a whispered voice, her appealing eyes wide open with unspoken disquiet. She addressed herself to Whitney. "Will there be *intelligent* beings down there?" She was voicing the questions that were becoming tense in the thoughts of all five. Would the inhabitants, if intelligent, be creatures of cruel instincts, or kindly?

They declared afterwards that they believed they had all prayed as they looked down upon that strange world.

Aloud Alma Field exclaimed, "Now may God be with us!" They all understood her feeling.

Slowly and more slowly — from 200 miles an hour to 100 — to fifty — the ship sank into the vaporous cloak of the planet. With still more reversing of the directional electronic energy applied by the controls in the hand of Austin, to counteract the acquired inertia of motion and the increasing pull of Venus, the sky craft slowed down until it became poised one hundred and fifty miles above the land surface of the Venusian world.

For another hour the *Radiokin* remained there, like a satellite brought to a stop. This was to allow the outer hull to adjust itself molecularly to the change in gravitational stress and, most important of all, to prepare it for the great comparative rise in temperature to which it was now to be subjected.

Then, Wolcott and Austin ventured to cause the craft to descend to a point seventy-five miles above the surface of Venus. After another thirty minutes they sank it again, this time to an elevation of less than fifty miles. A corresponding wait with no harm to the bright hull encouraged the explorers; and Austin dropped the ship slowly to twenty-five miles, then to fifteen, then to ten.

By this time the outside of the *Radiokin* was covered with a heavy frost, condensed and frozen out of the thin air by the extreme coldness of her plates.

At five miles above the ground a rift in the cloud floor, miles in length, was suddenly observed below, not far to the left. And then the travelers from the earth saw

"A world ne'er seen on land or sea,
Nor yet within the skies."

Curling wreaths of vapor condensing into cloud substance, formed the inner edge of the opening. Through the latter a land of rich growth, clothed in the familiar green of earthly forests, appeared.

Strong bright sunlight streamed upon the ground below, throwing back hues of greenness and overtones of color that enravished the minds of those beholding the richness and warmth of the scene.

Mrs. Field pressed close to her husband.

"Are there any people there, do you suppose?" she asked.

Her voice was normally quiet and deep, but her words were now faint and thin, and weakly spoken. They expressed, however, the question which was in the minds of all.

Austin was the only one who replied, as Professor Field drew his wife still closer.

"We'll find them soon enough if they're there, and we may see more of them than we want to, too!"

As he spoke, he dropped the ship further. Down through the opening in the cloud ceiling the *Radiokin* sank, a shining little world of five souls, a great white frosty ball out of the blue, visitant to a new world.

"It's inhabited," cried Austin. "For that jungle is cleared away, over there." And he pointed to a field, ten acres or more, in the midst of a relatively thin grove of trees. He also called attention to a stream of water not distant from this spot.

Somewhat encouraged by the pleasant aspect of the place, the five agreed to risk a landing. Slowly they descended upon the center of the clearing. As they came to rest upon the even, grassy soil, Austin's quick eyes again discovered another significant feature in the situation. He declared his belief that the inhabitants of this land must be intelligent creatures. He pointed out what seemed to be a well-made road leading out of the shadows under the trees, along the edge of the field.

Even as the five watched from the interior of the *Radiokin,* and looked in the direction which Austin indicated, a moving form cut across the sunlight filtering down through the trees where a long and shaded lane gave an approach to the clearing.

And five very human, human beings looked away from that spot in the woods, looked away from the shadows of the lane between the trees. They looked into one another's eyes. None asked aloud any question. But — what to do?

CHAPTER III

Arrival in a New World

Nobody in the *Radiokin* was anxious to be the first to leave it, to trust himself to this unknown land, on an unexplored planet.

However, there was nothing in view to cause alarm. There was only the rich green of trees, and the close-trimmed green of the lawn-like field upon which Austin had brought the ship to rest.

But that shadow in the woods!

Wolcott and his four companions were unable as yet to know what that movement might mean. Some creature — at least unearthly — was stirring there. Something! It could easily be something which would make it highly unsafe to venture to expose themselves to its reach.

"Let's wait a few minutes, just as we are," said Wolcott, and his gray eyes narrowed to slits, and opened and narrowed again, betraying the watchful tenseness which the softness of his voice belied.

And so for a little the five waited and took counsel. They had rifles in the main cabin, but they hoped they would not need to use them.

It was finally decided that Austin and Wolcott would unfasten the cabin door and make a short sally to reconnoitre. Field and his wife would remain aboard and attend the door, ready to assist the two men to return within, with the utmost celerity, if necessary.

Whitney was willing to go, or to wait inside the ship. It was finally arranged that he should go with Austin and Wolcott.

This plan of action was immediately carried out. The members of the expedition insisted on Wolcott's being the first to place foot on the planet. From a sense of delicacy no reference was made as to his relation toward the whole enterprise as its financial backer. But his four companions were constantly mindful of this fact; and they felt that Wolcott should have priority on this occasion.

Austin and Wolcott had small arms under their coats. Whitney bore no weapon.

In his pocket Wolcott had a little silken flag of the United States. He carried a small staff, and was about to set up the standard of his country in the soil of Venus — thinking little, in his excitement, of the cultivated or artificial nature of the grounds upon which they had alighted — when sounds, unmistakably exclamations, arrested every movement on the part of the three. The men centered their gaze upon the point from which the noises came.

The trio stood transfixed, as two figures, then a third form, emerged slightly from the wooded edge of the clearing.

The newcomers were not, indeed, wild animals or other creatures of monstrous form, but *folks* — persons — "Venus folk," as the visitors from Earth came to call them.

Were they human beings? One would say, Yes.

They were *like* people of the earth, certainly, but slightly different from them in ways indefinable at that instant, perhaps having to do mostly with features and facial expressions. They possessed a strangely rich and vital brilliancy of complexion.

In size these Venusians were not much at variance with those who had arrived on their planet in the *Radiokin*. In build they were remarkably similar to members of the human race who inhabit the countries of the earth's western hemisphere.

It was plain to the members of Wolcott's party that the two who now advanced nearer were male Venusians. The third Venusian was a lovely feminine creature, clothed in white or very light-colored stuff down to the knees, with golden girdle about the waist, and with brown or tan stockings revealing well shaped and delicately moulded legs. Wolcott noticed that all three wore shoes not noticeably different from the well-made low shoes of the people of the earth.

One of these Venus men took the initiative in speaking.

"Ala," he said, or something that sounded like that.

He had spoken with enough force and volume to cause his voice to carry across the hundred feet more or less which

separated him and his two Venusian companions from the men of the *Radiokin*. His utterance was evidently a form of greeting. Whitney, usually not at all quick in conversational situations, was the first to reply.

"Ala," said Whitney in response, smiling and raising his hat. A smile, but the anxiety of uncertainty in his heart.

With that the Venus man raised his own head covering, a large helmet-like affair with flexible brim which he had thrown back and away from his face. He also smiled, and held his hat high where he had raised it in a sort of salute, then immediately replaced it.

The three Venusians continued to approach, and the three from the *Radiokin* respectfully stood their ground. The Venusian woman moved close beside the third Venusian, who had not yet spoken. She held her hand in intimate grasp upon his forearm.

Her escort, upon coming up to easy speaking distance, now pointed to the big ball not far distant, and smiled, showing an eager, questioning attitude.

"Da qua?" he said, or something which sounded like that.

The intruders could not answer. They could only make friendly smiles. It was both embarrassing and ridiculous. Austin was mumbling to himself.

Just then, sounds were heard from the *Radiokin*. The Fields had observed that the reception of their companions had been not unfriendly. They were opening the door, and they presently appeared.

At this, an involuntary cry of surprise came from the feminine member of the Venus trio, as she saw Mrs. Field and recognized in her a member of her own sex. Did their common femininity have universal significance? Was it an invisible bond of unity and understanding, through all creation?

Somehow, all felt safer and more at ease with the two women present — the Earth woman and the Venusian woman.

At this point it occurred to Wolcott that there was a way in which he and his companions could probably inform these Venusian people concerning themselves — by signs.

The Indian sign language used by the Rees in earlier days

in the Dakotas when they found it necessary to talk with a Mandan or a Gros Ventre, had given him an idea. An Indian would bend down and scoop the dust of the ground together, for instance, gathering it up into a little mound, to indicate that some one had died and been buried.

And now Wolcott asked Field the astronomer, "Could you not quickly and easily draw a picture, or, rather, a diagram representing the solar system? You could point out the central luminary, and say the word '*Sun.*' You could draw the orbit and the form of Mercury, and pointing to that planet in your diagram, could utter the word '*Mercury*'."

"Yes," replied Field, "that would be easy and ought to be understandable."

Wolcott continued, "You could trace an orbit just outside that of Mercury, and place on it the round form of the outline of another planet. Pointing to that you could say '*Venus*' and at the same time touch the ground with your other hand, as much as to say, 'This represents Venus, the heavenly body upon which we are all standing'."

"Finally," he suggested, "you could draw the orbit of the earth, and a representation of our globe upon it, and speaking its name — saying '*Earth*' — turn toward the members of our own party, pointing first to your diagram, then to us and the *Radiokin*. The inhabitants of Venus are plainly very intelligent creatures. They are undoubtedly well enough educated in the physical sciences, including ordinary astronomical information, to understand what you mean. They probably know perfectly well that the earth rotates along an orbit next outside of their own path around the Sun; and they will understand your chart and your gestures."

This was the plan which was now successfully carried out. Field ran to the ship. He returned with a large piece of white cardboard, which he placed on the ground.

As he began to make his astronomical diagrams, the Venus folk watched intently. After making his figure of the sun, Field sprang to his feet, and pointed up into the sky directly toward it.

The Venusians comprehended at once what he was trying to get across to them. They evidenced their understanding

with smiles and exclamations, and with some comment among themselves which their visitors could not understand. Field now drew the orbit and the outline of the planet Mercury. And the Venus people proved apt and ready, by repeating after Field the name we use in English for that speedy body which races closest of all the members of the solar system about the all-controlling Sun.

"*Mer - cu - ry,*" said Field, slowly.

"*Mer - cu - ry,*" repeated the more mature of the two Venus men. He spoke with very good pronunciation. Those from the earth were pleasantly impressed by the musical depth and resonance of his voice.

"*Mer - cu - ry,*" said the other two Venusians, to get the sound of the word correctly.

Field then drew and showed them his representation of Venus, and gave them to understand that it meant the world to which he and his companions had just come, on which they were now all standing together.

"*Venus,*" said Field, slowly, clearly.

"*Venus,*" the Venusians said, repeating the word several times, seeming to be much amused to learn, in the tongue of their strange celestial immigrants, the name used by their visitors for their own inhabited sphere.

And when Field finally drew the orbit of the earth, and pictured his own world on its perennial route around the Sun, and when he pointed to himself and his companions as coming from that "*Earth,*" they became unmistakably excited. Keenly, with an intensity that went far beyond the bounds of mere curiosity, they scrutinized their visitors with fresh interest, these strange creatures who had come to them out of the clouds. They talked rapidly together.

Field named the earth again. Now the Venusians were quick to attempt the name.

"*Ert,*" they said, again and again; "*Ert . . . da l'ert . . . da l'ert.*"

Then Wolcott added his voice to that of Field, in trying to explain their presence, and said, "We are people from Earth — *Earth people.*"

"Ert pepul," repeated the Venusian woman, after Wolcott, and her voice was rich and soft. *"Ert pepul!"* Then she said it in her own tongue, *"pomo da l'ert,"* combining her own language with her newly learned name for the earth. And there was incredulous wonder in her lustrous eyes.

The next move was made by the Venusians. They escorted their guests along the gravel path which had been observed by them from the *Radiokin,* to a magnificent house which came into sight as the entire party emerged from the further side of a grove of large trees and dark rich undergrowth. It was not unlike a large country house on the earth. Its materials were chiefly stone and tile. What was apparently granite composed its walls, — fine grained, hard, grayish white. Behind this exterior, as the visitors later discovered, was a kind of concrete, which made the walls especially thick and massive.

The roof was of white tile. The astronauts were to learn that in Venus the Sun's heat in its temperate zones always seems relatively high as compared with temperatures on the earth. This because the residual heat of Venus, itself, escapes slowly on account of its many clouds. And when the storm-parted clouds are blown away by prevailing winds in the upper atmosphere, and the rays of the Sun strike the ground below, resulting temperatures at the surface of the planet can be really oppressive. The explorers were to find out subsequently that building materials used in Venus are generally in white or very light-tinted hues because the lighter colors reflect more of the heat rays and keep interiors cooler.

The space travelers from the earth were also to discover during their stay in Venus that, due to the abundant rainfall on the planet, frequently coming in the form of torrential downpour, its inhabitants had learned, through the centuries, never to build their homes or industries on other than the safest locations with regard to storms. Whenever possible — and it was usually possible — such construction had its footing upon bedrock, and was never erected in narrow valleys containing water courses. The visitors from the earth were also to find that the Venusians had been equally as strict and

guided by foresight in the engineering, location, and building of their roads, for roads were still in use by them for surface transportation although their radiokinetic age, with vehicles able to soar, had arrived. Therefore, flood disasters were no longer known to Venusians. And that, in spite of the vastness of Venusian oceans, and the volume and violence of Venusian storms.

The Venusians and their visitors were now quite close to this Venusian dwelling.

The windows in this house, as in many of the other ones the newcomers were to see later, were of sizes more generous than those ordinarily found on the earth. On Venus the travelers were to discover that there were many days of dull, cloudy weather during a considerable part of the year. And its sun-loving people built, as the space-conquering voyagers found, in such a manner as to obtain all the light possible on those darker days. Their windows were fitted, however, with heavy shades for use as protection against the power of the direct rays of the sun.

The passengers of the *Radiokin* soon came to realize that they were to be housed in the home of an outstandingly wealthy family of this Venusian country. It was fortunate for them that their landing had been made in such hospitable surroundings, and that the spot on which the *Radiokin* rested was a private park belonging to the genial Venusian who so willingly became their benefactor and host. He now thoughtfully gave orders to those employed about the estate that they make it easy for the strangers to pass back and forth between his dwelling and their ship.

The five had not been on Venus more than an hour or two when their host indicated that he wished to go with them to their landing place. Arriving there, they found numerous heavy, newly pointed wooden stakes laid by. They also saw laborers, of powerful build, ready, if Wolcott and his companions wished it, to drive these stakes into the field to anchor securely their spherical ship. This operation was forthwith accomplished, greatly to their satisfaction.

In short, all adjustments necessary for the stability and safety of the ship were made. Then the travelers, who had

taken with them from their ship a few personal belongings and a little food, were invited to return to the mansion.

There they found that Mr. and Mrs. Field had been assigned a beautifully furnished suite of two rooms with a bath connecting. One of these rooms was for sleeping and contained two beds, one single and one double—both luxurious. The companion room seemed meant for either individual or social enjoyment, with its fireplace, book shelves, easy chairs, and reading table. There was also in this room a musical instrument which looked like a piano. It was built, however, in circular form except about the keyboard. The latter was mounted within a crescent-shaped opening.

In the wall beside the fireplace was a built-in television screen, of a size perhaps five feet across and three feet high. The screen resembled the stage of a theater, in its external setting, and beneath it was a cabinet, likewise built-in, and fitted with control dials.

To each one of the other three members of the party a suite of two rooms was assigned, similar, in the main, to that given for the use of Mr. and Mrs. Field. The last word in sleeping and living comforts was to be found everywhere. Coloring and style and minor details of design and construction gave to each set of rooms its own individuality.

The visitors from the earth were to find later that the houses of even the less wealthy Venusians were built not merely as shelters, but with an eye to beauty of design and effect, with no dilapidated or neglected shacks in the country known as *Ammon,* in which they were being entertained.

And it was thus that, in their spacious quarters in this Venusian home, the weary travelers, after sharing a light repast in one of their rooms, rested well and slept soundly.

CHAPTER IV

First Day on the Lustrous Planet

All awoke with brilliant sunlight pouring through their windows, the sunlight of a new day in a new world. It was the sunlight of an unprecedented day, a day pregnant with uncertainties about everything, except the certainty of unknown and unfamiliar difficulties. There would be unknown customs and language, as well as unknown attitudes on the part of Venusians toward them and their future status in the Venusian world.

Wolcott dressed and shaved himself with care, that first morning in Venus. He then knocked on a door which gave admission to Austin's quarters. Austin was glad to see his chief. He had been on the point of going in search of him.

"I don't know how the others feel," said Austin to Wolcott, "but as for me, I'm hungry. I wonder what they eat, and when, down here."

Before they had left the earth the members of the party had said "up there" when referring to Venus. Now that they had descended out of the sky of Venus upon its surface they found themselves speaking of the planet as "down here," and of the earth as "up there." It was all a matter of relativity and of local gravitational effects, as they were discovering. All the universe was vividly becoming to them one great creation of intimately related parts.

While the two hestitated about what to do next, there came a rap at the door. Outside stood a servant holding a tray on which there was a rough sketch of a table with persons seated about it in the act of eating. Their host had taken his cue from his guests. He was using the same pictorial method of announcing something, much as Field had done in getting it across that the party had come from the earth. He was now telling his guests that breakfast was waiting.

The servant pointed to the stairs and indicated that the two were to descend with him. He grinned and made a pretense of swallowing his index finger, to make still clearer the idea of the morning meal.

Austin immediately took the hint, and Wolcott followed him closely as they made their way to the head of the stairs, and descended.

Below, the two presently entered a large dining room which had generous windows opening upon the east. In the center of this room was a table, set for eight. Mr. and Mrs. Field and Whitney were already in the room. Their host was there, and with him was the Venus woman who had come out upon the grounds with him, to see who their strange visitors were. After courteous greetings around the table, more smiled than spoken, all present were seated. The two Venusians in whose home the others were guests, conversed quietly together.

A man servant brought in dishes of something that proved to be sliced fruits floating in their own juices, as a first course. While these were being served, the Venusian gentleman smilingly essayed to introduce himself by name to the newcomers at his table.

"*Er Forrestiere,*" he said, laying the tips of his fingers upon his chest.

"*Erres Forrestiere,*" he continued, introducing the lady—"*Erres Erla Roba Forrestiere.*"

It was evident that she was his wife.

The members of the party of the *Radiokin* were then introduced by name to Er Forrestiere and Erres Forrestiere by Wolcott, and these preliminaries over, the first course, much like delicious grapefruit and orange, was eaten with much relish. The English language and the tongue of the Venusian country of Ammon mingled about the table without discord. But more than words could do it, grateful smiles of the earth-born guests expressed the thanks of the five to the two Venusians as every need was anticipated. It even seemed like New York or Paris or London when cups of steaming hot drink tasting like coffee, were passed.

"We are certainly being treated with the utmost kindness by these Venusians," remarked Field. He addressed his words in a quiet way to his wife and his other companions.

But the intent, the spirit of his remark, was noticed at the head of the table and rewarded by a pleased and friendly response. Mrs. Field heartily agreed with her husband.

"Yes," she replied, "Mr. and Mrs. Forrestiere are very kind."

Her use of the name caused a quick smile of appreciation to pass between host and hostess.

Then a puzzling incident occurred. Mrs. Field had been saying to her husband that "*Er*" in this Venusian land was undoubtedly the word for *Mister*, and "*Erres*" the corresponding prefix used in the case of a married woman. *Er* Forrestiere and *Erres* Forrestiere would mean Mr. and Mrs. Forrestiere. She turned to the latter, who sat on her left, and was on the point of trying to illustrate the use of the personal prefixes in her own language, applying them to her husband and herself, when her attention was arrested by the sight of another woman, younger than Erres Forrestiere, entering the room.

Er Forrestiere had also quickly noticed her appearance in the doorway, and at once arose and stepped toward her. He greeted her with a smile and a kiss. She sat at the table opposite Erres Forrestiere. As she sat down she smiled across at the maturer Venusian woman, who returned the greeting, and the two conversed for a moment in an undertone of friendly intimacy and understanding.

These Venusian women were obviously devoted to one another, and Mrs. Field was observing mentally that mother and daughter were beautiful in their quiet simplicity of manner and poise. The evident regard and fondness of both of them for Er Forrestiere also impressed her as spiritually deeper than the ordinary comradeship either between husband and wife or between father and daughter, to which, in the homes of her friends back on Earth, she had been accustomed.

But was it possible that Erres Forrestiere, herself still looking youthful, could have a daughter of such ripeness of young womanhood, Alma wondered. Her companions at the breakfast table had been similarly interested and somewhat puzzled. But all assumed that Er Forrestiere and the two women were father, mother, and daughter.

What, then, was the mystification felt by the breakfast guests when Er Forrestiere, after seeing that the younger Venusian woman was suitably served, introduced her to them much as he had introduced the other Venusian lady — as *Erres Forrestiere!*

"Erres Forrestiere," he repeated — *"Erres Maya Scaness Forrestiere."*

And then the guests from our world were made known to her by name. They greeted her cordially, concealing their perplexity as to her place in the household of their host, and the breakfast proceeded. After the fruit came hot Venusian cereal and a kind of buttered toast. There was milk, and sugar, an unfamiliar kind of bread, and what seemed to be honey. Milky white eggs of unusual size were steamed in their shells in a tiny ball-shaped device on the table. The utensil employed for this greatly interested Wolcott and Austin. It was not wired or, apparently, electrical.

The meal concluded, all arose. Er Forrestiere consulted briefly with the two other members of his family; and after an understanding of immediate plans had been effected, the two women withdrew, arm in arm. Forrestiere made his guests understand that he would like to have them follow him into the large lounge and library which occupied the central part of the mansion on its first floor. The lounge adjoined the dining room, and on its opposite, or west, side, was a living room.

There were convenient entrances from both of these rooms into this lounge. On its south side were large windows of plate glass, looking out upon a beautiful panorama of rolling country and of distant mountains. In the middle background gleamed the buildings of a city. Perhaps the city might be twelve, perhaps fifteen miles away. The air was crystal clear. Wolcott and his companions could see, from one of these windows, a shining stream that wound away from upland heights, down toward and around one edge of the city, to the right.

In the immediate foreground the sloping lawn of the Forrestiere place, dotted here and there by evergreen shrubs and trees, approached almost to the windows.

In the west wall of the lounge was an ample fireplace. At the other end of the room a part of the wall space was occupied by one of the television screens already referred to, as much as eight feet wide by five feet high. Otherwise, north and east walls were for the most part filled with shelves containing many volumes.

Reading chairs were here and there, each having its individual lighting. Along the center of the room were two long reading tables, each one with three beautifully color-pictured and shaded reading lights above it. These lamps, now lighted, were fitted with large translucent shades done in cloud design.

"What beautiful lamps," Wolcott exclaimed. Sunrise, storm, and sunset skies were the subjects through which the mellow light from within was diffused into the room. Er Forrestiere was proud of the lighting effects in his library. He had turned his lights on for the sake of displaying their effects to these visitors who had so lately come down out of the Venusian skies.

Single easy chairs, divans, and large deep seats, some placed pleasantly before the fire, others invitingly opposite the television screen, made up the rest of the furniture. Thick rugs of rich material covered a flooring of the color of dark oak.

Presently Er Forrestiere escorted his friends to the front or north side of the house. He looked up searchingly at the sky and pointed out a small thin cloud high in the air. By gestures, and finally by stepping back into his library and pointing to the storm depicted on one of his lamp shades, he succeeded in conveying the information that a storm was to be expected.

Before visiting further, the voyagers — by signs also — gave Forrestiere to understand that they wished to go out to the *Radiokin.*

When he understood their desire to do this, Forrestiere ordered a car. When the car appeared, the five found that it did not differ as much as they might have expected, from an automotive vehicle on their own earth. Instead of having

enameled surfaces on the outside of the body, however, the exterior finish was in some kind of metallic plate, of glare-softened nickel hue.

"But listen!" exclaimed Austin; "how extremely quiet the motor is!"

The instrument board within this car was suggestive of that in the *Radiokin.*

The morning visit to the *Radiokin* was for the purpose of inspecting the ship and of obtaining records and other personal articles. The five had decided to make the presentation of gifts to the Venusians soon.

With the possibility in their minds before starting out on their astronomical voyage that they would find highly intelligent life on Venus, they had gotten together a number of useful and interesting things representative of the life of human beings on the earth. These they were now going to fetch, to give to the members of this Venusian household.

Arrived at the ship they found a tent had been erected nearby. This had been set up by order of Er Forrestiere, who had posted a guard — a new token of friendship which pleased the five and gave them increased confidence.

Forrestiere had exhibited a marvellous restraint — so it seemed now to the Earth folks, who were beginning to be able to think of the situation as it must appear in the minds of the folk among whom they had so strangely come.

At first they had been so absorbed in their own sensations, their own apprehensions, their wonderment, their conjectures as to the treatment they would receive at the hands of these unknown and remote people who circled so near the Sun and so far from the earth, that they could only fear and wonder and guess. They had been unable to put themselves in the place of the Venusians long enough to reflect much upon the calm and even demeanor manifested by them.

For instance, they felt that Er Forrestiere, had he been an inhabitant of the earth, would have been impatient to peer inside the *Radiokin.* He would have shown this impatience as soon as he had discovered the strange craft descending upon his athletic field. But, as Wolcott now realized, standing at Forrestiere's side, the latter had not done so. Surely,

this had not indicated a lack of interest, even of excitement, on the part of the Venusian. His forbearance might have been due, the day before, to fear. But surely not now, Wolcott thought. This was the restraint of almost superhuman courtesy, and Wolcott realized that this courtesy also required *him* at this point to invite Forrestiere to examine the interior of the ship.

The invitation was accepted immediately when it was extended by Wolcott. For many minutes Forrestiere remained within, the grateful and gracious guest of the Pilot and his companions. He was shown the construction of the walls; the comforts of the main cabin; and the berths, the sleeping straps and the other conveniences and safety devices of the individual cabins. He was particularly thorough in his scrutiny of the Pilot's cabin, and looked long at the instrument board and the controls.

Finally, however, it was Forrestiere himself who took a Venusian timepiece from his pocket. He soon afterward gave signs of desiring to conclude his stay aboard. Outside again, he entered his car, but delayed his departure as if waiting for his guests.

"I think our Venusian friend expects us to return with him," said Wolcott to Whitney. "Where is Austin?"

Austin had been inspecting the pile housings and the radiokinetic reservoir beneath the cabin floor, taking the temperature of various containers and checking up on adjustments and connections. In ordinary use the radiokinetic block does not become overheated, but during periods of disuse there was some possibility of a rise in temperature sufficient to melt steel and other metals used in its construction — sufficient to ruin it for future service.

Austin had found everything all right, however, and presently his dark round head reappeared, his black eyes shining with satisfaction.

"Looks as if we'd be able to get back to the earth without any trouble," was his terse greeting to Wolcott.

The possibility that something might happen to the ship to disable it while they were on Venus had been a cause of

some anxiety. A consciousness of this lay beneath some of the thrill connected with the unique situation in which they found themselves.

While Austin had been working below, the other members of the party had gathered up the articles designed for the presentation ceremony. Loading these into Forrestiere's car was a formidable task, which would have been impossible if the Venusian vehicle had been small.

The gifts included books selected because they contained many pictures of buildings, places, and people of many countries around the earth. There were two or three of a religious nature, including a beautifully bound Bible. There was one covering scriptures of mankind. Wolcott placed the books, attractively wrapped and tied, in the waiting car.

Whitney followed, bearing several young fruit trees representative of the fruits of the temperate and sub-tropical zones of the earth. He brought also some suitably packaged seed corn, seed wheat, and rice, seeds of lettuce and tomato, and a variety of seed beans. He brought a small bag of seed potatoes, a pineapple, a few bananas, and small seedling evergreens, a laurel shrub, and a rose bush.

Professor Field emerged from the *Radiokin* bareheaded, his light thin hair blowing in the Venusian breeze, carrying for his wife a beautiful potted red geranium which she had guarded throughout the voyage. She herself carried a paper box bearing the label of a Minneapolis florist. On a last trip from the *Radiokin* she fetched a basket containing a few oranges from California and Florida.

Field burst into hearty laughter in which all the others joined, with the discovery that his wife had slipped in a quart bottle of milk obtained two days before by Austin, from Garrison.

"We've established a cosmic milk route!" remarked the astronomer — "created a new kind of 'milky way'! Tell the National Dairymen's Association over there in that old world of ours, that maybe they can organize a radiokinetic motorship route, and develop markets on Mars and Venus!"

Field was in high spirits for the first time since he left the earth on this the biggest gamble a man of science ever

made with his life for the sake of such exploration. And now as he pushed his star charts over to one side to make room for Mrs. Field in the capacious eight-passenger car, his mood proved contagious.

"And here comes the human chimney," said Whitney, as Austin made his final exit from the *Radiokin,* smoking a cigar, and holding under his arm a container of smoking tobacco and two or three packages. Austin locked the ship's door, threw away what was left of the cigar, and clambered into the car. Then they were all taken back to the house of their Venusian friends.

"Are you planning to introduce tobacco to the Venusians?" asked Wolcott. "Do you think our host will take kindly to it?"

"These are not cigars," replied Austin, indicating the packages. "These boxes contain chocolates. What do you say to giving them to the two Venusian ladies we have found so gracious to us in this home?"

"I'll admit, however," he added, "that I am bringing in a few more cigars and cigarettes than I expect to use. Would they not make a novel present, along with our other gifts, for our host Forrestiere? As to my own comfort — no one could object — d'you think? — to an occasional pipe, or cigar, out of doors?"

"Well, we have to go cautiously," Wolcott reminded him. "We are greatly indebted to the kindness of these people. They don't understand us yet. And I think our habits should at no point give any possible offense or unpleasantness. I was thinking only of that. Your idea of playing Sir Walter Raleigh may be all right, too. But remember what happened to him!"

The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of the party at the front of the mansion. The sky was now overcast and dark, but the large comfortable reading room, into which they were again ushered, was alight and beautiful. In the great fireplace a cheery fire burned; for a cooling damp had come into the outdoor atmosphere.

The Venusian host had a servant bring the bundles and packages of his guests into this room, where they were placed carefully in a corner. Then he tactfully and graciously withdrew, leaving the five to their own devices for a little while.

Mr. and Mrs. Field at once retired to their suite. Alma was finding all these new experiences, pleasant although they had been thus far, a severe strain on her nervous strength and endurance. The other three went to Wolcott's room, relaxed, and compared their first impressions of Venus and her folk.

Rain soon began to fall. It grew darker, with almost the darkness of night. Harder and harder came the rain drops until the torrential downpour began to cause anxiety in the two little groups of visitors to this planet.

In the midst of this storm the earth people were summoned again to eat. Their fears were somewhat allayed when they found that none within the house, among the Venusians, were taking any notice of the rain. And soon the severity of the storm was over and they thought no more about it.

CHAPTER V

Bonds Between Earth and Venus

After this noon-day meal, a part of which consisted of some appetizing meat dish, Wolcott secured the attention of his hosts. Addressing himself to Er Forrestiere with a deferential bow and gesture, and with questioning eyes looking toward the library, he sought to suggest that they all enter that room with him and his companions, if this might be permitted. He finally succeeded in making his suggestion clear. The Venusian indicated that this would be agreeable, and the whole party went into the commodious lounge and library.

When they had entered this room, the two Venusian women stood for a moment conversing in low tones before the fire, while Er Forrestiere seated Mrs. Field in a deep and comfortable chair nearby, and drew up additional easy chairs for his other guests. Wolcott and the men of his party busied themselves with arranging the books and other articles they had brought from the *Radiokin*.

While this was being done, Er Forrestiere joined the ladies of his household, going with them to a wide and richly cushioned divan, where he sat down between them. Here these three visibly relaxed and talked quietly in the deep, rich, musical tones which even yet were arresting to the ear and fascinating to the auditory sense of the newcomers from the earth.

Mrs. Field, from her position at the right of the semicircle, found it difficult to refrain from watching her hostesses too intently.

Erres Forrestiere the elder was dressed in a gown of forest green, made from fine material firmer and smoother than woolen, more softly lustrous and clinging than silk, and edged about both shoulders and below the throat with a narrow border of exquisitely soft white fur. An additional bit of this soft whiteness nestled upon the inner curve of her right shoulder below the golden abundance of her hair; but upon the opposite shoulder was only the narrow strip of green and white.

Her beautiful arms were bare and in their golden whiteness needed no ornament. Her left arm was thrown across the low back of the seat, her hand raised caressingly and her fingers partly hidden where their tips unconsciously moved in slow affectionate stroking motion against Er Forrestiere's head. There was quiet and queenliness in her attitude while she sat there close and contentedly beside him. The clear blue in her eyes brightened with affection whenever she spoke to him and lighted with new interest from time to time in the movements of the guests about her.

While Wolcott searched among beribboned packages for the one containing "The Twentieth Century", Mrs. Field continued shyly to scrutinize the younger woman.

Erres Maya, like Erres Erla, was strikingly beautiful. Both Venusian women had the same large, rather deeply set and lustrous eyes, heavily lashed and set rather widely apart beneath fair brows. Erres Maya's eyes, however, were darkly glowing, and the joy of youth lived within them. She had the same rounded shapeliness of head possessed by Erres Erla, the same exquisitely tapering chin, and inviting lips. The nose was intriguingly delicate and feminine.

Maya's neck and shoulders, too, were smoothly curved and supple, and needed no concealment or embellishment. But instead of the curling gold of Erres Erla Forrestiere's hair, black was the color of Maya's equally soft and abundant tresses.

Maya's hair was in natural curls about her brow and ears; it clustered in intimate waves about her head. At the back it was gathered, winding strands and all, in a copious mass, held in place at the back of her pretty neck by a broad golden clasp. Some of the raven locks, however had been allowed to escape from this confinement, and fell free in tempting ringlets. Her dress was of sun yellow, like silk in its texture, with tiny straps lying close upon the satiny skin across the shoulders, and with lace-edged low-cut top circling above well filled breasts and passing round the body beneath the arms.

In respect to their mien, also, the two Venusian ladies were striking opposites. Erres Erla might be expected, being

"In respect to their mien, also, the two Venusian ladies were striking opposites."

older, to possess the calmer and more settled understanding of life which years, and perhaps marriage, would tend to give her. But the difference between her and Erres Maya was something more. The latter was manifestly more vivacious by nature. Erres Erla was like the golden sunshine, quiet, warm, and beneficent. Erres Maya was more like the inviting glade high in the mountains, seeming to love to catch and reflect back the warmth of the sun, but stirred at times by heated winds from lower levels, that sometimes rise and surge.

Looking at Maya again, Mrs. Field turned to Wolcott, and remarked to him, in a quiet aside, "She looks more girl than woman, but how vital and alluring!"

The two women, although fitted closely above the waist, were dressed in gracefully plentiful skirts, giving freedom of movement. Erres Erla's dress on this occasion came well above her ankles; but Maya's was shorter, falling but little below her knees and revealing beautifully formed, delicately rounded legs. She was more slender than Erres Erla, and in her lines and in the grace of her action, decidedly lovely. Both women wore silken stockings, and leathern sandals which matched their gowns in color and quality.

"What perfection of beauty", thought Mrs. Field, as she regarded them.

Whitney expressed that thought in a soft aside to Austin.

"What perfect beauties!" he whispered.

At last the men of the *Radiokin* completed their preparations for the presentations, and Wolcott faced the three Venusians on the divan.

Er Forrestiere sat a little forward, intently watching Wolcott. Something in the Venusian might have reminded one, at first sight, of President Washington. There was the same clear resolution expressed in the eyes, the same wide, determined mouth, much the same facial contour. His, too, was the rich, almost amber-tinted complexion of his women folks. He sat with an arm partly encircling Erres Erla.

Erres Maya pressed a little nearer to him, on her side, and Forrestiere gave her hand, as it came to rest upon his

knee, a quick responsive clasp. All three Venusians were plainly absorbed in their attention to the unusual occasion, and self-forgetful in their wonder concerning what these visitants from the earth were about to do, apparently for their benefit.

Wolcott began talking, holding one of the books and a sheet of paper with notes. He knew that his words would not be understood by his hosts. But he hoped that their import might be apprehended. He then glanced down at the sheet on which he had written out his message to the Venusians. With a gesture of courtesy toward them, he read it:

"Er Forrestiere, we come to you the first of any of the inhabitants of the world that moves next beyond your planet in the family of the Sun. For both your people and our people live under its rays. In common our lives and your lives depend upon its warmth.

"Also, your goodness and kindness show that your hearts are softened and your minds informed by the same Creator who created us also, whose dwelling is also here in Venusian hearts as well as in the hearts of those, our people, who live and love and labor, and worship Him, out there in the world we call the Earth.

"And so, in token of these common bonds, material and spiritual, we present to you this volume which tells in print and in picture, about mankind and his life and his achievements upon the Earth."

Wolcott then placed the book in the hands of Er Forrestiere, who rose and made some reply not at the time intelligible to the "*Ert pepul*", as the Venusians continued to call their five guests. His response was nevertheless unmistakably friendly and appreciative.

The spirit of the occasion, and the fact that this was a formal presentation of gifts which had been brought from the earth to be given as a gesture of friendship, were now quite clear to the members of the Venusian household.

Their rapt attention and keen pleasure increased with every new token, as each guest in turn brought forward ob-

jects indicative of his own special interests, and previously checked as appropriate by Wolcott and by the group as a whole, back there in North Dakota.

When, last of all, Mrs. Field opened the florist's box and presented Erres Erla with a beautiful bouquet of pure white carnations while her husband placed on the floor in front of Maya the gorgeous potted crimson geranium, the delight of the Venus women knew no bounds. They embraced each other in exuberance, then shyly, and with quiet grace, attempted to express their appreciation to Mrs. Field—forgetting, for the moment, in their excitement, to visibly include the others.

The ceremony was thus concluded, much to the satisfaction of all. The immediate object had been achieved—a friendly understanding and sympathy between these people of Earth and their Venusian hosts.

But when it became publicly known in Venus that Earth people had arrived on their planet—what would be the general reaction in the Venusian world, the visitors wondered.

They didn't have to wonder very long about this, as we shall presently see. After the presentations, Er Forrestiere resumed the initiative. He pressed a button for a servant and sent for a large sheet of material that seemed to be a kind of cardboard. He arranged his guests about one of the long reading tables, and standing at one end of it he bent over and drew in bold outline a map of Venus.

Field and Wolcott were the first to understand what their host was doing. There were the outlines of continents and oceans—three continents. Two of the continents were seen to be joined by a narrow isthmus, forming two great bodies of land somewhat resembling the two major land divisions in the western hemisphere of the earth. Upon the right, or eastern, of these two Venusian continents Er Forrestiere made a small cluster of crosses. These at first mystified the group from the earth. Then he pointed to the shaded area and said, "Ammoinka."

"He means that the crosses mean a city," said Austin.

"*Ci-ty,*" repeated Er Forrestiere, catching the sound of Austin's word.

Then the Venusian, with his finger still pointing to his criss-cross symbol for a city, there on the map before him, raised his other arm and pointed out through one of the great south windows.

The first thing that the visitors from earth saw out there, and it surprised them, was that the rain had ceased as suddenly as it had come. All was bright, fresh and clear outside. And then they saw that in the distance, where Er Forrestiere was pointing, city buildings were clearly visible, in shining outlines. They were sharply outlined, but rather mysteriously small because of their remoteness, as they shone in the afternoon sun. The thick Venusian clouds had parted again.

"That, then, must be the Venusian city of *Ammoinka,*" said Alma Field, in subdued tones. She was trying to visualize in her imagination the Venusian fathers and mothers and their children—the Venusian population that must be living and loving and working beneath and within the white gleam of that Venusian city . . . She had once been in social service in New York.

Erres Erla moved to her side.

"*Eh, L'amialada. Eh l'Ammoinka minya.*"

The Venusian woman spoke softly, and her eyes also spoke in a friendly warmth as she gently placed an arm about her younger sister who had come from a distant world into her own.

The Venusian wife realized that this little woman from Earth must have left much that was dear to her, back there in that mysterious world, of which she, Venusian woman, could know as yet so little. And the Venusian woman sensed also how Alma must have followed the man she loved, out into the void, knowing that perhaps she would nevermore see her own "Earth" again, — perhaps nevermore draw breath in its life-giving air—perhaps die, with the man who loved her, if so it should be, in the cold and emptiness of outer space or upon a planet without atmosphere whose surface and climate were not for human life.

And with a delicate tact Erla the Venusian comforted

Alma who, so like herself as a woman, yet so unlike her in cosmic origin, stood beside her.

Alma Field was deeply touched, then overpowered, by the loving nearness of the Venusian woman. Suddenly yielding to the impulse to do so she took Erres Erla's beautiful hand in both her own. She kissed the soft Venusian fingers, and wept. Alma was no longer the young wife who had been equally at home in New York, Berlin, and Washington. She was a tired, distraught, and timid child in an unfamiliar world of strange although kindly grown-ups. She must learn so much — in this new world.

And Erres Erla, the lovely Venusian wife, would mother her and help her to see it through.

Erres Erla then drew Alma across the room, pushed her gently down upon the deep wide seat at its further end. Here she placed pillows about her, pushed back her hair and stroked her temples. Alma sighed and relaxed; and she was, for the time, content.

But how would it be in the future?

They were not left long in doubt, however, as to the reception which awaited them among Forrestiere's countrymen. They soon had an interesting, somewhat startling, yet entertaining and reassuring experience.

The entire party gathered about the television screen; and picturegrams and transcasts from various places in the Venusian world were shown. First there came scenes of a great quarry in which laborers of powerful build were seen working, with the aid of huge machines. In other scenes were forests and tropical flowers, and brilliantly colored birds moving across the foreground among the branches. Then came views of Venusian seas traversed by trim white boats; and there were some gleaming beaches shown, where Venusians bathed and played.

Presently Forrestiere made an adjustment at the dials and a picturegram came upon the screen showing a scene in what looked like a large, comfortably appointed hotel lobby. Venusians were to be seen there, sitting or standing about, and watching pictures being thrown upon a large screen similar to the one in Forrestiere's library.

In the privacy of Er Forrestiere's lounge the remote announcements in the language of Ammon could be plainly heard. The show being broadcast was being sent out from the transcastorium of one of the daily newspapers in the city of Ammoinka.

Suddenly, while Wolcott and his four companions looked on, a quiver of intensity came upon them all. For, without any warning to the watching five, through the medium of a wonderful equipment known among the Venusians by a name which might be translated as the *telenavolt,* a clear picture of their own *Radiokin* burst upon them, appearing on the screen of the Ammoinka Daily just as it rested upon the Forrestiere grounds outside.

There, vividly framed on that screen before the eyes of the Venusian onlookers in the distant city, lay the ship, as it was at that instant, moored safely on the field of their friend Forrestiere. The ship and its background of field and forest were evidently being plainly projected before the throng of watching Ammoinkans. These latter were observed to be turning toward one another, and their words of surprise and wonder could be somewhat faintly heard, there in the room where Wolcott and his companions sat. The words of the announcer could also be heard, more plainly; and as he proceeded, those who had been the occupants of the *Radiokin* on its voyage to Venus, heard him utter the words *"Ert pepul."* Wolcott looked out of the window, yet he could see no camera or cameramen on the estate.

So then! It was no longer a secret, anywhere in Venus! The inhabitants of this strange Venusian country already knew of the advent among them of the space ship from earth!

New and disturbing were the emotions of the explorers as they looked upon the pictured countenances of these city people of Venus who, at that very instant, were being told about the arrival of the five on their planet, and of their presence there in the home of their good Venusian friend who had so kindly taken them into his household as his guests.

Wolcott glanced anxiously at his four companions, wondering whether they, too, were feeling the sense of shrinking, if not of fear, which *he* felt. For he could not truthfully deny it!

Turning back to the screen Wolcott became absorbed again in the behavior of the Venusians in their distant transcastorium. Venusian eyes glowed, but there was only wonder in them — no fear, no apparent antagonism, no apprehensive contracting of features which might give him real reason for anxious concern for himself or for the other members of the expedition.

So deeply interested in the transcast before them were the five, that none of them noticed the absence of Forrestiere from the room. Actually he had been gone for some minutes. Suddenly his familiar form moved across the foreground of the picture of their *Radiokin,* in company with that of the watchman he had posted on the field. More amazed than ever, the five from the earth now glanced around the room, and immediately saw that Forrestiere was, indeed, not there with them, in bodily presence.

Er Forrestiere had slipped out of his house and away from his guests, to consult with the man he had left to guard the *Radiokin.* And now they were seeing him, not directly, not even as directly televised from the Forrestiere grounds to them. They were watching the picture of him and their ship as it was being shown on the wall screen of that building in Ammoinka. They could also see the Ammoinkans as the latter viewed the picture before them there; and Wolcott and his companions, as they watched the transcast in Forrestiere's home, observed that the Venusians in Ammoinka, watching the news, raised their hands in a peculiar Venusian salute of respect and esteem, and broke into a volume of enthusiastic applause when Er Forrestiere's form appeared in the picture.

In this way the five visitors from the earth suddenly realized that they were indeed guests in the home of a very distinguished Venusian. Alma spoke for the others, optimistic and hopeful. Glancing at Wolcott she said simply, "Perhaps it was a good Providence that guided our descent upon the estate of this eminent Venusian family, instead of upon a populous terrain. Anyway, we must have faith!"

CHAPTER VI

Ammon's Welcome

There were other scenes, there were Venusian news items, during the next few minutes. And while the group at Forrestiere's was still intently watching and listening to the changing program on the screen, a male Venusian, accompanied by Forrestiere, stood in their midst.

He was the Venusian they had seen with Forrestiere and Erres Maya at the time of their landing from the *Radiokin.* He was not now clad in the informally nondescript attire in which he was clothed at the time they had first seen him. Instead, he was dressed in a dark garment of formal cut which fitted his magnificent shoulders closely and suggested what those from the earth would call an English walking coat or cutaway, revealing a waistcoat of similar material. A thin white edging of silken cord outlined the collar and front of the coat and gave it an important air, perhaps of official significance.

This Venusian's trousers were of the same dark material, carefully pressed but fitting thigh and knee closely, and disappearing below the knee beneath the tops of highly polished black boots. In his hand he held a cap or hat, dark, made with smooth and rounded crown, and with a gracefully curved and semi-flexible brim, after the manner of headgear once seen among the Swiss and Italian nobility.

The ladies of Er Forrestiere's household arose in greeting. Wolcott and his companions did likewise. Forrestiere turned off the television program.

The newcomer, after saluting the ladies and their guests, spoke briefly with Er Forrestiere and then retired to the entrance hall of the mansion. He returned immediately, now escorting two other Venusians, who were in dress similar to his own. One of these bore a roll.

Er Forrestiere at this point indicated that he wished the entire company to be seated. He placed and pointed out chairs for this one and that one. This formality over, the Venusian who had first entered arose, and addressed himself

to the five visitors who had come into his world from the interstellar spaces.

None of the earth people comprehended what the Venusian said, but could understand that it was friendly. After speaking briefly he took the roll from the Venusian who held it, and with a few additional words and courteous gesture delivered it into the hand of Wolcott, who arose to receive it.

The document was made of gray-white heavy material of fine texture. Wolcott opened it, prompted to do so by his host. He sensed that it was an official welcome to Ammon. It measured when opened perhaps ten inches in width by fifteen or more inches in length. At the top was a sort of map showing countries of the Venusian globe, upon which the country of Ammon was more particularly shaded in green. The other land areas appeared in sunlight yellow. Venusian writings appeared above the map.

The body of the document was engraved in large bold characters, totally unintelligible at the time to Wolcott and his companions. Centrally located below this official welcome was a symbol in the form of clasped hands, under which the sun's disk radiated its light; while at the two lower corners of the page were beautiful hand drawings in color representing the solar system. These were identical in conception and execution except that in the drawing at the left the planet Venus was made especially noticeable, while in that at the right the Earth was made particularly prominent. Immediately below the text of the document appeared a large eye, as if ever watchful over the symbolically clasped hands and over the solar system to its uttermost regions.

Wolcott finished examining this official welcome to Ammon, for the moment, and addressed himself to those who had brought it and presented it. He proved equal to the occasion. He accepted the scroll with expressions — gestures — of appreciation. And his smiles of friendship were rewarded by those on the faces of the Venusians. He briefly expressed in his own tongue, his gratitude and that of his companions in travel, for the care and kindness his party was experiencing while on Venus.

The Fields, with Austin and Whitney, had risen, at a quiet sign from Wolcott, during the close of his speech of acceptance and thanks. They bowed, with him, to the members of the Venusian delegation. And thus the formality ended.

The hour was not yet too far advanced. It was not much past the Venusian mid-afternoon. But the strain upon the members of the expedition had been felt by them all. None realized this more than did their Venusian friends.

And so it was that they were not further entertained that day. Neither was any curious Venusian permitted to see them. The quiet and seclusion of the Venusian country house were strictly preserved, for their benefit, by Er Forrestiere. And Erres Erla's motherly attentions, seconded by the warm-hearted readiness of Erres Maya to bring Alma little comforts and smiling encouragement, cheered mightily the weary wife of Professor Field.

All the Earth people retired early, that night, almost physically exhausted, the reason for which they would later understand. They were breathing the air of Venus, not that of the earth, and they needed a bit of time to get used to the change. Their first complete Venusian day was over, and all had gone well. But what would the morrow bring?

All the Venusian world now knew of their presence on Venus. What would the future hold for them in this strange new planet so near the sun? And how long should they remain on Venus before attempting the great flight back across the black etheric ocean to report the success of the expedition to the people of their own world?

Night fell upon them in unbroken blackness. Clouds hid the stars and there was no moonlight to temper that darkness. Venus had no moon. They slept. And Alma Field, asleep in her husband's arms, dreamt of her girlhood days and thought in her dreams that she was back on earth again, happy in the home of her father and mother under the roof of the little rectory on Fifth Avenue.

CHAPTER VII

An Extended Stay

The days that followed were full of the strain of new adjustments.

In spite of the abundant vegetation of Venus, which constantly absorbed large quantities of carbon dioxide and added heavily to the oxygen content of the Venusian air, it was found by the visitors from the earth that there was not relatively as much of the latter in the Venusian air as is the case on Earth. Since spectroscopic observations of Venus, made repeatedly by scientists in their laboratories and observatories in America and Europe, had indicated this, the five were not surprised at feeling the change.

Apparently, however, the actual amount of free oxygen in the lower levels of Venus was not seriously inadequate for Wolcott and his friends if they did not overdo themselves.

After a couple of weeks of rest, carefully provided for by their Venusian hosts, the five from the earth were again in very good physical condition. By this time they were making themselves understood more and more by the Venusians, and the Venusians were causing them to feel more and more appreciation for the kindliness shown them in the details of their life with them in a Venusian home.

Arrangements were soon made for the instruction of the five in the language of Ammon. There followed regular classes in the Forrestiere library. The language of Ammon was universal throughout Venus, as Ammon was the most highly developed of all Venusian countries in the arts and sciences of Venusian civilization.

Forrestiere during this time took them now and again into Ammoinka, and into the hills and valleys of the surrounding countryside. They saw many of the activities of the Ammonite people, in their towns and villages, as well as in the city. When they passed by a hotel, or a restaurant, Forrestiere stopped long enough to point out the Venusian word, the sound and meaning of which he had taught them in the study periods at his home. This, so that they could identify

such a place on their own. He provided them with Ammonite money, and he showed them how to use it to pay for food and other articles, if this should be necessary.

There came a day when the Forrestieres took all five guests into the city for overnight and put them up at one of the best hotels there. In the evening the whole party attended a Venusian opera. It was based on the story of a romantic love between a Venusian of great renown in Nimern, the continent across the Green Sea to the west of Ammon, and an Ammonite maiden.

The five from the earth could not follow the plot too well. To them it was mystifying. However, the story seemed to end in the marriage of the older Nimernite and the Ammonite maiden, in their intense happiness together, and finally in a transmutation of both of them, to the strains of voice and instrumentation holding Wolcott and his companions spellbound. In transformed beauty of form, and clothed, it seemed, in light, they stood there facing the audience, hand in hand, each with one hand raised in joyous farewell. The great stage became incandescent in a golden haze, to the sounds of a triumphant finale, and the happy couple were gone from sight, perhaps to some other galaxy, for their honeymoon.

After the opera and return to the hotel there was dancing in its ballroom. It was there that Whitney met Illinda.

She was the daughter of Er Lomia, an official of high rank in Ammon, whose home was in a little village just outside the city of Ammoinka. She was, from the Venusian standpoint, somewhat petite, and striking in the perfection of her physical development. The smile in her eyes, her proud carriage, her poise — these and the appeal of her personality to Whitney — allured him. Her smile was one of ready response, mingled with some, not unfriendly, amusement at his attempts to converse with her in her own language. Later she accepted Whitney's overture and his proposal that they enjoy Venusian refreshments together at *The Sapphire* in Ammoinka, a daintily furnished place patronized by guests and students of the University of Ammoinka.

Illinda's eyes — the large, soft, darkly shining eyes of a beautiful Venusian woman — were always in the foreground of Whitney's vision after that first meeting. If he gazed about his room — or out at the mists that hung over the Green Sea of a morning — he could see those smiling eyes, her delicately beautiful face aglow with increasing friendliness, looking back at him, looking into his very soul and stirring within him a turmoil of emotional concern and affection—and a longing such as he had never before known.

He could see her standing before him when she was absent, standing in the midst of the glorious Venusian sunsets, standing as a vision in the darkness as he lay in his bed, sleepless for thinking of her.

After about three weeks an invitation was given to the five to remain there on Venus for a period of a Venusian half-year. This would be about three and two-thirds months of time on the earth. The explorers finally decided to accept this invitation. Wolcott had at first wavered. He was impatient to return to the earth.

During these months ahead, however, the members of the expedition would be able to study the language further and make valuable records and memoranda to take back to Earth. Whitney would particularly study the fauna and flora of Venus. Field would set up his telescope and other instruments for new observations and calculations having to do with the solar system, despite the ever returning clouds. From these observations he hoped to bring back to his colleagues many new contributions to astronomical knowledge.

"And I," said Austin, "would like to find out what I can about the mechanical achievements of the Venusians."

Wolcott agreed to interest himself especially in the economic and business organization of Venusian peoples. And Mrs. Field said she would try to find out what she could about Venusian religion, Venusian psychology, and social ideals and relationships. Whitney the biologist volunteered to help Alma by interesting himself in Venusian marriage and home life as a social phenomenon, chiefly because of its physical basis.

During most of their remaining stay on the planet they would be the guests of this charming and kindly Venusian family.

Time and again these travelers had wondered as to the relationships between the three persons in the Forrestiere household. Erla did not seem old enough, they had decided, to be Maya's mother; and the two women could not be sisters, for both bore the Forrestiere name. Was Maya then the wife of a younger brother of their host?

By the end of this more than three months' stay, all five were more intensely interested than ever before in this strange new world. They had not made much progress in the language, but they were learning. And they were finding out much about the economic and social conditions on Venus.

At last an event occurred which brought an answer to one of their most insistent questions.

One morning, the day before this period was completed, they heard sounds of great excitement and rejoicing in the Venusian household. Two young people, seemingly the Forrestiere children, whom they had heard about but not seen before, arrived, evidently after being away since some time before the landing of the visitors from Earth. They were a young man of apparently some twenty years of age, and a slender Venusian girl, perhaps six years old, who were warmly welcomed home.

Erres Maya pressed forward and caught the young child up into her arms.

"A'Miamayadol", she exclaimed, her soft, usually quiet voice still soft and deep but now full and strong, as with maternal affection. And the child covered her face with kisses.

Whitney and Mrs. Field happened to be present. They could understand enough by now of the language of Ammon to catch Maya's phrase of endearment, and they were again puzzled. Was the little Venusian girl indeed the daughter of Maya? If so, where was her father, and who, they wondered.

And while they wondered, the child broke away from Maya, and ran to Forrestiere, throwing herself into his arms with cries of delight and affection.

"*A' Miadadar . . . Dadar . . . Dadar!*" sang the little one. And he hugged her tight, and held her close, lovingly, to the accompaniment of happy sounds from them both, the child's cheek pressed hard against his, and her arms around his neck.

He and Erres Erla had been chatting affectionately with the young man, who had greeted them both warmly after putting down the bags he had brought. It was easy to see at a glance that the youthful Venusian was the son of Er Forrestiere and Erla, for his face bore unmistakably the features of his father while his hair was light and wavy like his mother's.

But the little girl? She also seemed to bear a decided resemblance to Er Forrestiere, in the lines of her mouth and in that clear and resolute look in her eyes. Yet the childish eyes were of a deeper, a dark violet hue, — darker than either Forrestiere's or Erla's. And her hair, delicately rich and of pearly softness, was something a bit darker than shade of hazel.

"Angel-child!" breathed Alma Field, as she gazed enraptured at the little Miamaya, now being embraced by Forrestiere as warmly as she had been greeted by Erres Maya.

She glanced questioningly at Whitney, and he answered with a slight nod, showing that he was beginning to reach the same conclusion which she found herself rather reluctantly forced to accept. He spoke to her in a low aside, with suppressed intensity of interest.

"I believe", he said, "that Er Forrestiere is the *father* of both the young man and little Maya — that Erla is the boy's mother, while Maya is Miamaya's. In other words, these two charming Venusian women are Forrestiere's first and second, his older and younger, wives. Do you suppose this is the usual family arrangement in most Venusian homes?"

He had remembered the Ammonite word "Dadar" which he'd heard the child use, as the word for "Father". And he had also remembered that Forrestiere's first name was Yan, and that the young man had been introducd to them as Yan Forrestieresek, the suffix probably corresponding to our "Junior".

Alma had no chance to reply, for now, the first exuberant greetings over, and the young folks properly presented to the visitors from Earth, the Forrestieres excused themselves. Still talking happily together, the older folks escorted the young people to their respective rooms.

The two visitors at once looked up the other members of their party, and related the home-coming which they had just witnessed. They all agreed that here was something quite different from the monogamous type of society prevailing in America.

Mrs. Field felt shocked at first. And yet, everything there in the home of these Venusians seemed harmonious and happy! And Commissioner Forrestiere (as the visitors later came to know him) and his Erla and Maya all seemed so unquestionably and so thoroughly contented in each others' good times and companionship that she was at a loss to find any fault with the family arrangement.

Later, Alma and the other members of the expedition were to find that, whatever the details of the more intimate family life were, in a Venusian family like this one, the sense of domestic security, along with buoyant spirits, existed in most Venusian homes.

Alma and her companions wondered for a while about the nature of the sleeping quarters in *"duogamous"* Venusian families. (Alma coined this new word to describe a family where there were two wives and one husband.) Had ideal sleeping accommodations and practices, agreeable to all concerned, been worked out in such cases? As time went on, the guests learned that Venusian houses for duogamous families were so designed that each wife enjoyed comfortably ample sleeping and dressing room facilities of her own. Alma shared such quarters—and a wide, comfortable bed—with Erres Maya on one occasion, by special invitation of the young Venusian woman. Er Forrestiere was away from home that night.

Later in the day on which the young folks of the Venusian family arrived, the members of the party from the earth learned that the young man, Erla's son, had just returned

from a term at a Venusian university in Carpen Ara, on the continent of Nimern; and that he had brought back home with him his little sister Miamaya, who had been visiting at the home of an aunt nearby.

Next day it was agreed by the adventurers that it would be worth while, well domiciled as they were, and all in good physical condition, to stay on Venus somewhat longer than they had planned. They finally fixed upon an extension of six terrestrial months for further residence and study on the planet, to make a total of almost ten months as reckoned on Earth, from the time of their landing on the Bright Planet.

Some weeks later, during a talk before the fireplace in the library where the two Venusian women were serving light afternoon refreshment, Alma was able to pick up a little more about the social life and practices of Venusians. Real conversation was still somewhat difficult, altho it was now at the end of the fifth additional month. For some months past Erres Erla had been learning to speak simple English as well as giving Alma elementary instruction in her own language. Now Alma asked a simple question:

"Are two wives and one husband," she inquired, "as happy as *one* wife and *one* husband?" She used her fingers in order to make the question clearer.

"O yes," speaking in the new language, replied Erla — "or more so — better — yes. First wife then has close, good younger sister she didn't have before."

In the mind of Alma, however, her question remained mostly unanswered. Erla's reply was so contrary to the feelings involved in her bringing up, back there on the earth! She still felt that way even after Erla, with a slight toss of her shapely Venusian head and a knowing look at Alma, added "And, *l' amialada*" (a term of endearment), "how could we Venusian wives, in a family like my own, so precious to me and to us all — how could we Venusian wives possibly have a stronger or more intimate bond of affection and common understanding than we have with one another?" (This is the way Alma reported it later.)

Then, making a special effort to make her thought and

feeling better understood by Alma, Erla, although seemingly inhibited or inwardly embarrassed, or finding the English difficult, added, and with emphasis: "Venusian husband loves wife and she loves him, but if Venusian husband restless, as Venusian husband may become, she cannot be selfish — only unhappiness then, for both — yes? One husband best, in life of Venusian woman; but one wife sometimes not, for Venusian husband. We meet the — what do you call it, 'need'? — keep on loving — preserve the home. Yes. In your country, is different?" (Although the Venusians were gifted with extrasensory perception, and could perceive the *thoughts* of their visitors instantaneously, this did not necessarily make it possible for a Venusian to speak the best idiomatic English. To them the language of their guests was like a live recording. They knew at once the *meaning* of the spoken English, yet needed time and practice to master the acceptable use of the spoken word themselves.)

Alma sensed the meaning of Erla to be that among the Venusians it was felt to be the height of selfishness, rather than of love, for a wife to expect her husband necessarily and unconditionally to be exclusively hers for life. Yet, their own love, their marriage, their own home, was always to be kept sacred. She felt clearly Erla's insistence that the first love, the first marriage ties were always to be held holy and inviolate, unimpaired by any possible subsequent love.

Later on Whitney made a special report on Venusian marriage and family life.

It was a regular meeting of the staff.

The five were gathered about the table in the main cabin of the *Radiokin* where it still rested on the clearing of the Venusian's estate.

"The Venusians," Whitney was saying, "have observed that in many cases in their world, an early marriage, while being in every sense happy, sacred, and permanent, seemed to them to have a proper place within it in its later years— still preserving its sanctity, love, and solidarity, — a proper place within it for its being supplemented by a second marriage."

Where this occurs, he'd been informed, it was, for one thing, a Venusian way of satisfying an elemental and insistent need of the Venusian of mature years for the stimulus of younger feminine companionship, perhaps of a kind he'd never known before.

Whitney continued:

"Such an arrangement within marriage, when it occurs and meets with the strict requirements of Venusian society — so the Venusians maintain — avoids domestic flare-ups, dishonesty on the part of the male, and secret trysts, or, on the other hand, the divorce which might otherwise, almost of necessity, arise from discontent and neurotic breakdown in middle age. As to situations clandestine or deceptive, whether in matters of sentiment or of business, Venusians, it seems, have never learned to lie to one another. That, alone, amazes me."

Whitney had talked with two Venusian biologists and a Venusian physician, he said, who pointed out to him that the mating needs of Venusian men were considerably different from those of Venusian women, especially in duration. This they considered medically important, and held that supplementary marriage of the middle-aged Venusian with a much younger Venusian woman was sometimes strongly indicated and recommended.

At this point Wolcott spoke, with Whitney's consent, and explained that Venusian scientists had been able to make him, also, understand that their approval of something other than an ultra strict monogamy proceeded from facts of Venusian biology and medicine. It was recognition of these facts, they had told him, which made it permissible, honorable, and sometimes urgently desirable, for a Venusian to marry, at length, a second time without dissolving his earlier marriage. This, however, was something that was allowed to happen only if the circumstances were such as would make the second marriage possible without causing disruption or unhappiness in the home life of any individual or any couple. Under such circumstances Venusian medical authorities held that a second

marriage could conserve and prolong both health and happiness in the family.

Could these opinions, Wolcott wondered, have anything in them salient and salutary for application to problems of health and happiness, especially in the more mature years of family life, on the earth, in its cultural systems there. At any rate, he reflected, the charming children here on Venus rarely if ever knew what a broken home was, or suffered behaviorwise or emotionally from any such cause; they seemed to be the most assured yet most spontaneous and outgoing children he'd ever seen. Even adult Venusians seemed to be childlike without being childish. Venus was a good world in which to bring up children.

"Haw, Haw, Haw — Haw — Haw — Awe — Haw!"

The unexpected merriment sounded through the window of the Radiokin.

"What's all that about?" wondered Austin aloud.

From Whitney: "That's Forrestiere again, telling his Venusian political friend Lomia . . . Before coming in here I asked Forrestiere about population and birth control. When he finally understood what I meant, he laughed like I'd never heard a Venusian laugh before, fit to kill him — the very idea that a Venusian should not know how to have or not to have — children. Or that any one should question his right to know or not to know!"

The two Venusians outside continued to make merry, and Whitney added, "Forrestiere laughed at another of my questions, too. I had asked, 'Doesn't a husband in a household like yours get into hot water when he happens to say something to one of his two wives about the other one, something especially complimentary, for instance?'

" 'Why, my good earth-man friend,' he replied, still laughing, 'no male Venusian — bachelor, lover, husband, or whatever — talks to a Venusian woman (whether wife or not) comparing any other Venusian woman to her. Any Venusian who did,' said Forrestiere, 'would be sillier than a monkey in one of our jungles'."

Glancing at Mrs. Field, Whitney said, "I find it interesting that a married Venusian does not marry again except

with the consent and approval, duly recorded, of his wife by the earlier marriage. I'd say this explains a lot, such as, for example, the happy family life in the case of our attractive Venusian friends in this household."

Alma remained rather unyielding.

"Don't you think it possible, tho hardly probable in the case of Venusians like the Forrestieres," she said, "that if some of our Venusian friends accompany us on our trip back to Earth, they'll decide that perhaps our ways are better? Oh yes, I'll admit this much, — that sometimes these Venusian husbands discover or more fully develop the grand passion only after years of married life. Perhaps that emotion may sometimes come into full flower in their society, deep, rich, and mature — even more so — when Venusian maturity of understanding and affection meets again with new young love. Then you have, I suppose, in such cases in their world, *duogamy*. They like it, Forrestiere says; at any rate they like the *right* to live that way.

"I'll end with the story of a talk with Forrestiere about this" — and Alma laughed, then continued.

"It was in Forrestiere's library. There he stood, at a window, as I entered; he was smoking, rather cautiously, one of those cigarellos Austin had given him.

"I pointed to the framed portraits of Erla and Maya, the ones which you noticed standing on one of the wide window sills.

" 'Er Forrestiere', I said, using the tongue of Ammon as well as I could manage it, and as I had thought it out beforehand, 'you have two beautiful wives. Suppose you could have only one, like my husband Henry.'

"At this, Forrestiere's eyes flashed — like nothing you've ever seen in them. He spoke right out, loud and forthright.

" 'For some three hundred years — that was long ago in Venus — we had what you call — what is it? — compul — compul — compulsory mon — what is it?' (He'd heard you use the word *monogamy*.)

" 'It was all to be so wonderful,' he continued. 'It *was* all right for a good many Venusian couples — *better* than all

right — fine — best of all, they felt — they two — nobody else! But there was new misery — sick minds — sick bodies — dishonesty — same way all? — pretend — happy? — No.' In his excitement his use of English was very disconnected.

"His eyes flashed again as he went on, trying so hard to make me understand, and expressing himself with remarkable clarity in the unaccustomed tongue. He insisted that no Venusian would ever again be unconditionally limited to the sole companionship of one wife. But this he made equally emphatic, — that all Venusians pledge to one another when they marry, and they hold to it, that their marriage shall endure so long as they both shall live and shall, either one or both, continue to love and to need the other, with the understanding, however, that a later love is always possible and permissible. Forrestiere was very much in earnest about this," said Alma in conclusion.

Probably Whitney had been thinking of Illinda while Alma talked — of Illinda and of *her* particular Venusian family. He had met Illinda's mother and father, for they were with Illinda at the opera. And at Whitney and Illinda's *tete a tete* later that evening at The Sapphire, she had told him there were only her parents and herself in *their* household.

At any rate, Whitney now turned toward Alma in a manner of one who might have been speaking as an advocate of Venusian society: "Well, Alma, whatever you think, don't be too ready to condemn the social organization as we find it in this beautiful planet. And remember what I overheard Forrestiere say to you on the occasion you just referred to, when he said — remember his saying it, only in his broken English? — 'In all our lands the family, whatever the nature of its household, is the recognized social unit of our culture and civilization, as it is of yours. This it is, also, in its legal status. Our family life is the foundation of all that is best in our existence here'."

"Yes, I remember," from Alma.

"Well?"

"Well," sighed Alma, "all I have to say is this: In order to have a happy married life a husband, whether on Earth or on Venus, must be frank, honest, and loving, whether it be a first or second marriage, or any other. In families like this — and our best families *are* like this — we human beings can have and do know what it is to have very beautiful, even exquisitely happy, love relationships between husband and wife, between parents and children. As Browning says 'Oh, the little more, and how much it is! And the little less, and what worlds away!' This very lovely relationship in family life — that of frankness, honesty, and love — has undoubtedly been achieved by us largely due to the spirit of the personal teachings of Jesus of Nazareth and to a Christian culture. From other origins, too, undoubtedly. And so, perhaps in such of our families, but only in such, we could carry this priceless sureness and security into a family life less narrowly limited. Yet in our world today, on any universal scale or generally, not so! Not even in Venus!"

Wolcott had been listening in silence.

"After all, haven't we found," he said, "more monogamous families in Ammoinka than duogamus? Monogamy is simply not required. Both types are found side by side, and in the same circles of Venusian society. Laws concerning inheritance and kinship provide for both types of family organization. However, even in the upper middle classes — that is, among the more wealthy of the Venusians — we have found monogamy commonly practiced. It seems to be largely a matter of private choice and circumstance and of personal decision. Regimentation of marriages, they say, is avoided by allowing for the unusual and by providing for it!"

The Pilot thought that the real basis explaining dual marriage among the Venusians, was to be found in the deeper levels of the intensely outgoing social and sympathetic nature of Venusian personality, and in the natural emotional generosity of Venusians. Mutual consideration and appreciation on the part of the one sex toward the other, carried to such a degree as these who had come from Earth found it existing in this Venusian world, seemed to Wolcott impressive, yet difficult to appreciate.

"How would that kind of a society work with us?" asked Field.

Speaking up again, Alma said, "Women — our women — wouldn't go for it. A few out of many of us might find this Venusian type of society and family life thoroughly good. But we — most of us — are not that unselfish — or something!"

"In *that* you're right," agreed her husband; "that's the way it is today, in our world; yet already, Alma, — but already! — family life is no longer static, as it was of old; as permanent, ideally, yes, but with a new dynamic, along with the energy of the atom."

Field continued: "You and I, Alma, will always belong to one another; but we cannot live, even in our own world, our own two little lives together in social isolation; in comparison our ancestors did just about that. You and I certainly belong together and we hope we always will; but we become more and more dependent upon ever closer and more intimate partnership with others in our time — socially, professionally, occupationally, intellectually, emotionally. Is it not the very nature of the family to become a part of this universally dynamic outreach and inclusiveness, at the same time keeping sacred all the true and eternal values — both those of our social philosophy and those of our religious experience and practice?"

Getting back to the question as to relative values in all forms of family life, Field, meaning to imply something complimentary to its Venusian flexibility, ended wth another question. "What good is an unbending monogamous society, anyway — even in our own world — that, in such numbers, just doesn't *monog?* By the year 2000 . . . "

Field's wife had interrupted. She had the last word.

"Well," she said, "regardless of the approval or the disapproval of such family organizations in *our* mores, I doubt if many among us would be happier or healthier in a household a la Venus. Wouldn't the common run among us end with a feeling like that of Charles, the husband, in Noel Coward's '*Blithe Spirit*' as he bids farewell to both his deceased-

but-still-surviving wives, — 'You can break up the house as much as you like — I'm leaving it anyhow'?"

Before the five met around the table again for a general resumé of findings and a review of observations of Venusian life, a new proposal was made to them by leaders of the present period in Venus.

This new proposal of the Venusians was that the five again extend their stay on the planet.

More and more the inhabitants of Venus had been thinking and talking with one another about their visitors from another world. The coming of the party from Earth was discussed not only in Venusian homes but in their universities. Learned Venusian professors and leaders in Venusian society and Venusian governments had for some time been seeking them out. Now they desired that their guests from outer space should double the previously planned duration of their sojourn with them.

It had been necessary for the party to note the lapse of time by means of their own watches and the clock in the *Radiokin.* Otherwise, except for Field's celestial observations, they had no way of knowing how long, in terms of terrestrial time, they were being absent from the earth. The Venusian days were shorter. And they learned that instead of three hundred and sixty-five days in the Venusian year, there were only two hundred and twenty-five. They discovered that the Venusians had divided this year into ten divisions. Each of these divisions except the last contained twenty-two days. The tenth division contained twenty-seven days, of which the last five were observed as a holiday season — and as a time for the closing of accounts of the old year and for preparations having to do with their new calendar year.

"This way of dividing the year, according to Forrestiere," said Field, "came from ideas of remote time past on Venus, that the circuit of their planet around the sun was associated with the number of fingers and thumbs the Sun God was supposed to possess. He used them, according to a primitive Venusian tradition, to keep Mercury and other heavenly bodies in rapid rotation."

Wolcott and his party presently had to come to some definite decision as to their plans for further action. They were concluding, Field calculated, a period of over ten months of time as it is reckoned on the earth. The Venusians now wanted the expedition to spend in addition a Venusian year more upon their planet, at the expense of the people of their several countries.

Said Forrestiere to Wolcott, "I wish you would do this. Our people want the benefit of lectures at our several universities. If you are willing to continue to be our guests, I will help you with simple interpreting. Venusians very much want to know you better, and to know something more than you have already told us about the history and culture of the races on Earth."

The Venusians offered world tours of their globe, field studies in various portions of their planet. In this way, they said, their guests from Earth would be able to make a more comprehensive report covering climate, geography, and life, in their world. And at the end of the proposed year of travel and study, they would, the Venusians thought, be able to send back to Earth on the *Radiokin's* return trip, a representative of good will, the first Venusian to carry a friendly greeting to the peoples of the earth. The country of Ammon offered to provide all necessary means of travel abroad in Venus. On account of atmospheric conditions on the planet it would be better not to use the *Radiokin* for these explorations. It would therefore be carefully guarded and cared for at the Forrestiere estate near Ammoinka, where it still rested.

And so finally, in spite of a desire on the part of all to get back to Earth with their almost unbelievable story, Wolcott and his party acceded to the warmth and urgency of their Venusian friends and of the representatives of various Venusian countries. They voted to accept the invitation of the people of Venus to remain and to travel among them for the extended period as proposed.

The five had come to love the atmosphere of friendliness and the carefree gaiety of their friends in the house of their host. It was going to be hard to leave the one Venusian household which at length they had come to think of as their own

Venusian home, and to venture out into that strange Venusian world as children into unknown lands of an unknown world.

It was going to be hard for Alma Field, too. She struggled with her emotions. She would have preferred to remain near the protecting arms of Erres Erla and Erres Maya, instead of traveling with the others over the globe of Venus. But again, for the sake of her husband, and because she wanted to remain by his side, she conquered her fears. Perhaps she could become, in a way, a guardian angel to the adventurers during their explorations into the highways and byways, over the lands and seas, of the strange Venusian planet.

At length, with official escort, the entire party set out for a stay of about three weeks at the University of Ammon in the City of Ammoinka.

CHAPTER VIII

Off For Venusian Research

The change of status, from being guests in a private home to being the charges of a nation and the guests of the people of an entire planet, was one which proved, after all, not too difficult or strained.

As Wolcott and his companions discovered, their benefactor, this Er Forrestiere, was a personage of public importance not only in Ammoinka, but throughout the planet. He had been governor of Ammon, and had had very thorough training and education in the law, especially in the constitutional history and the legal fabric of the *Federation of Venus*. He was at this time Commissioner of Food Supplies for the Federation. Therefore, because of his family and official position, he was able to help the Expedition very greatly with information and advice, and to make communications promptly for it, with public personages in different parts of Ammon and in other countries concerning the entertainment of its members.

The younger Venusian who had come out with Forrestiere to look at the mysterious ball from the clouds as it rested for the first time on Venusian soil, the one who had headed the official delegation of welcome to bear greetings from the Governor and the State of Ammon — this Venusian, Wolcott discovered, was another Forrestiere, a younger brother of the food commissioner.

Wolcott and his companions had long known their host as Er *Yan* Forrestiere. They now learned that the younger brother bore the name of *Jens,* and should be referred to as Er Jens Forrestiere.

Er Jens Forrestiere had studied medicine and Venusian sanitary engineering. He had practiced medicine for some years and served on the faculty of the University of Ammon, where he lectured in its department of public health. His brilliance and popularity were outstanding. He had, shortly

before the arrival of the *Radiokin* on Venus, been greatly honored by being chosen as the member from Ammon in the Department of Health, Federation of Venus.

Now Er Jens Forrestiere must, in connection with his new — and, as one might say, international — duties, soon go abroad in Venus. He was to make a tour of the three continents. He had official errands in the three leading capitals of the Venusian countries. He would therefore accompany Wolcott and the others, and would be of inestimable help to them.

It was agreed that Whitney should have the responsibility of charting and making maps; and of recording observations of climate and geography, assisted by Field.

Wolcott, Whitney, and Alma Field would study the history and present social structure of Venusian society, while that part of the record explaining the forms of government on Venus, was assigned to Wolcott, Field, and Whitney. To Austin was given the task of making observations concerning labor and industry on the planet. Field and Wolcott agreed to record what they could find out about Venusian schools and educational ideals.

With these arrangements made, all gave themselves to the task in hand. They began their tour of Venus.

For a time, the visitors from the earth spent their mornings at the University of Ammoinka, actually giving talks (as well as they could, considering their language limitations) about life and civilization on the earth. They had pictures, brought by them, to show their Venusian audiences. They also attended special courses, arranged for them, in the Ammonite language, and in Venusian geography and history. Their afternoons were spent going on tours especially planned and conducted for them. Some of these trips were in Ammoinka. Some of them were out in country districts at considerable distances from the city.

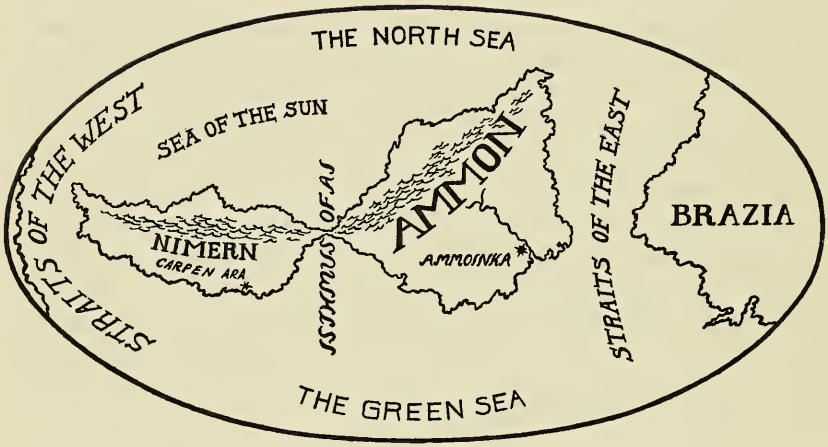
The visitors from Earth attracted about as much attention in Ammoinka, unless pointed out, as a group of Japanese or other Orientals might have attracted on the streets of New York City prior to the establishing of the United Nations

headquarters in that city. On the other hand the American astronauts from the *Radiokin* observed that, while the people of Venus have somewhat larger and perhaps more beautiful and brightly expressive eyes than do most individuals in the more favored races of mankind, they were strikingly like people of the earth. Their skin had an olive richness; but the tourists occasionally saw a Venusian woman whose skin was milky white, smooth and clear, such as one seldom sees even among the lighter-skinned women of any of the Western countries upon the earth.

Said Whitney, "The Venusian features must have been developed by evolutionary processes much in the same way as in the case of the human race upon the earth. It is as if the Creator made the peoples of Earth and the peoples of Venus from one form or model. It is as if He made them in the same image. That image is here and there allowed individual, racial, cosmic adaptation to its geographical — or planetary —environment. It is therefore not surprising that, since we bear a spiritual, emotional, and intellectual make-up much like that of the people of this Venusian country, it is only necessary for us to dress in the light-hued clothing of the people of this planet to be able to pass virtually without notice, in and out among its inhabitants."

The maps of Venus made by Whitney and Field, with the assistance of friendly Venusian professors, were a great help to the explorers in giving them an understanding of the shape and extent of the three great land divisions on the planet — Ammon, Nimern, and Brazia.

These continents encircle the globe of Venus equatorially, they found. They also found that there is, for the most part, only water and ice in the polar regions there, and that the planet has a rotation on its axis — so Field ascertained — similar in its plane to that of the earth. Ammon and Nimern they found to be, in shape and relative location, suggestive of the continents of North and South America. But they lie east and west instead of north and south. The great continent of Brazia occupied, they were told, one whole hemisphere — a comparatively wild, unexplored, and thinly populated region.



Map of Venus

The Continents of Ammon and Nimern are shown in their entirety, being in the same hemisphere. A part of the Continent of Brazia, an elongated continent with its greatest dimensions east and west, does not show on this map. The area shown here represents about three quarters of the storied planet as here described.

Between Ammon and Brazia lie the Straits of the East, while between Nimern and Brazia lie the Straits of the West. The north polar ocean is called by the Venusians the North Sea, and the ocean in the south polar regions is known as the Green Sea. In a sort of pocket formed by the north coasts of Ammon and Nimern lies a warm and sunny expanse of water called by the Venusians the Sea of the Sun.

The five visitors from Earth learned during their first days in Ammoinka that they would be taken on their "world cruise" in a fine, large motor ship belonging to the government of Ammon. They would proceed westward along the south coasts of Ammon and Nimern, then up through the Straits of the West. They would continue around the globe of Venus through the North Sea by a course that would skirt the long northern coast of Brazia. In order to complete the circuit they would sail south through the Staits of the East, and so back to Ammoinka, their starting point.

First, however, they remained there in the city of Ammoinka some three weeks. They were accommodated in a comfortable guest house at the University. They attended operatic, dramatic, and motion-picture shows in Ammoinkan theatres, after their daily tours.

On one of these tours they found themselves on the grounds of the National Corrective Institution of Ammon. They had to be told what this place was, for it looked nothing like a prison. Its cottages, constructed out of materials resembling the typical Venusian stone or stucco, looked much like the buildings on the campus of a large educational institution or private school. Or, on Earth, the lay-out might be taken for that of a sanitarium.

The visitors were escorted across the well-kept grounds to an administrative building. There, Wolcott and his companions met the superintendent of the institution. This official was of large stature. He was soft-spoken and a friendly smile lighted his frank and open countenance.

"Medda Lukas," said Commissioner Forrestiere to the superintendent, "I want to introduce you to my friends and

visitors from Earth." And turning to Wolcott the Commissioner told him that the members of the entire staff here were medical doctors (*"Mellore meddas"*).

The guests saw no barred windows in any building on these grounds. In one small building, however, windows were only a few inches wide, as they were also on one upper floor of another building. Whitney, the best linguist in the group, turned to the superintendent and ventured to ask a short question.

Said Whitney, *"Parkay peekay feenay?"* In the speech of Ammon this meant, "Why the narrow windows?"

The party learned that the special windows were in a sort of hospital section. Inside were translucent ceilings beneath which patients lying in bed could watch projected motion pictures in color, selected and controlled, as a form of therapy. Later, in Carpen Ara, Wolcott was to be permitted to see an example of this type of visual therapy, accompanied by softly sounding strains of music. He said afterward that it had almost caused him to fall asleep.

Here in this Ammoinka institution Wolcott and his fellow sightseers saw nothing resembling a prison uniform, or anything in clothing to distinguish inmates from others. This was true although they were taken through workshops where Venusian men and women were occupied with various activities. At one point they were taken into a room where a group of them were apparently listening to a talk by one of the *"meddas."*

The party might have stayed longer at this institution, but the Venusians wanted to take their visitors from Earth to see what to them was a very holy place — "The Cathedral Of The Clouds."

CHAPTER IX

Religion on Venus

The Cathedral Of The Clouds was located about four miles out from the center of the city of Ammoinka, high up on the top of a mountain.

The great cathedral had been erected in a glory of unsurpassed magnificence of size and design, white and shining, supported by many a sweeping arch and topped by turrets at its twelve corners. Diminutive minaret-like projections surmounted its entablatures and seemed to be reaching up into a fast-moving traffic of cloud banks now blowing across the open spaces of the Venusian sky. All this came into view, and grew upon the vision of the pilgrims from Earth as the radiokinetic car of their host climbed rapidly over the last shoulder of the mountain and more slowly approached the massive and towering edifice.

The entire structure was in white Ammonite marble — "Ammonite whitestone," the Commissioner called it.

"You have seen its shining glory by night," continued the Commissioner, "from the university campus down at Ammoinka; but perhaps you did not know that the cathedral is lighted day and night by cosmic rays."

Inside the cathedral there was indeed ample confirmation of Commissioner Forrestiere's reference to its cosmic ray illumination. The lighting was everywhere indirect. The stone walls glowed softly, and fingers of light converged from under the eaves to the highest ridges and points above them.

As the five entered the great sanctuary they saw row after row of seats, reaching away through the nave and affording a clear view of the distant chancel from every direction.

The visitors were guided slowly down a central aisle toward this chancel. At each step their admiration, and a feeling of reverence and wonderment, increased.

They wondered at the beauty of the jet black reredos, a great curtain covering completely the far end of the chancel.

At a great height against the black background of the reredos near the peak of the chancel, was a brilliantly shining yet seemingly distant golden orb, as that of the sun. The glowing sphere was surrounded by its own family of planets. Its rays extended onward, however, far beyond the planets in all directions, out, into, and among numberless pinpoints of brightness vividly bringing to the consciousness of those who beheld it all, the reality of the whole created universe of universes, in its untellably distant yet actually existent systems of stars — suns, worlds upon worlds, and nebulae.

Again, against the black and star-strewn background of the reredos, centrally rising from below at a level just above an altar, was an area of the curtain which gave the appearance of being a column of light. This consisted of phosphorescent fibres, woven into the curtain itself yet seeming to stand out against it, forming an always warmly glowing vertical volumn about twelve feet high and four feet wide.

This glowing column was edged with flame-like border from which thin lines of radiance everywhere emanated outward into the otherwise sable texture of the curtain.

At the very top of this emblazoned column, the basic hue of which was a soft blue, appeared a mystic monogram consisting of three interlocked circles, about and below which there were clouds, of dazzling and reflected glory such as, Alma and Whitney declared, they would say they had never seen done by the hand of man.

Midway between the top and the lower end of this column of light, and noticeably prominent, was a *cross*. This symbol was of a golden luster, a brilliant contrast to its background of blue, the latter darker here than elsewhere.

The cross?

For all the world as if it were the symbol of the self-sacrifice of Christ! Yet, could this be, in Venus? The five persons from the earth noticed a similar but smaller cross in each one of the four corners of the shaft.

Below this central cross was a third symbol consisting of a circle of tongues of fire. There were seven of them in the circle. Within the circle, white light, like that of day, was

intensified along lines which radiated from the center to each separate flaming tongue.

The very base of the shaft carried clouds of glory like those of its upper extremity.

Standing in the chancel immediately against the great curtain with all its colors and symbols, its suns and moons and clouds and starry worlds, all of them symbols of Venusian religion, was the altar. It bore at each end of its ten or twelve feet, a lighted candle.

"Oh!" exclaimed Alma, "those candles! Are we home again, on the earth? Oh, but I could believe we were in my father's old parish, with its ancient and beautiful sanctuary."

At the front of the chancel, on the right as one faced it, was a stand bearing a large volume.

"The sacred scriptures of the Venusians!" whispered Whitney to Field.

The visitors from the earth began to feel more and more mystified . . . Was this Earth — or Venus? A dream, or something real? Why should this Venusian Cathedral of the Clouds be *so much like* a Christian church . . . or synagogue? Yes — over there on the left side—even a pulpit!

There was one final detail in the near foreground. Only a few feet in front of where the visitors now stood, was a cushioned and slightly elevated strip, with darkly polished and finely wrought arm or elbow rest at its front edge. It ran along the entire front of the nave. Alma said nothing; but she stepped forward and knelt there. Wolcott followed. Then Whitney. Then Henry Field, at Alma's side. Last of all, and hesitatingly, Austin.

"I am overwhelmed, shaken, deeply moved," declared Alma in an awed undertone to Whitney, after the five had arisen from their silent devotions; "I hardly know what to think about all this, or how to express it."

She continued to talk quietly in whispered accents as the party again stood silently and reverently before the lighted chancel: "That all-but-real spectacle! The star-spangled universe! And the Christian cross — or is it so? — at its center, as if standing out before it yet incorporated in it and

casting its luster, without dimming the sense of its cosmic reality, to the far corners of creation!"

At this point the Commissioner, Forrestiere, conducted the party into a comfortable parlor within the cathedral, by way of an exit from the sanctuary at its forward right-hand corner. Here they were warmed and refreshed with a hot Venusian luncheon.

On this visit to the cathedral a sweet-faced, an almost divinely gracious Venusian woman had been with the group. She was clothed in white. A single, many-pointed golden star, worn as a brooch or emblem, was her only ornament. She and Forrestiere had frequently consulted together in the language of Ammon on the upward trip from Ammoinka. Perhaps she was a deaconess — a young woman of some sort of religious status in this Venusian country.

"This Venusian lady," Alma reminded her companions while they were enjoying their luncheon, "is the one to whom I was referred, the other day, when I asked about religion in Venus.

"Of course, it was hard to converse, but she gave me to understand that I might call her by the name of *Angela.*

"Instead of struggling too much with words," continued Alma, "I showed her pictures from a volume of my Americana — pictures of some of our churches and cathedrals, temples, shrines. I showed her some of our pictured religious art, pictures of saints and apostles. In particular, I noticed that Angela's attention was drawn to the *cross,* as it appeared, in one picture or another, on steeples and shrines. She pointed at them questioningly; yet she seemed to understand, with a readiness that surprised me, when with much effort I tried to explain in my limited Ammonite vocabulary, the story of the Crucifixion as something that happened on the earth some two thousand years ago. She seemed . . . well, she seemed to have known about this."

Alma turned and smiled at Angela, who at the moment was engaged in a quiet conversation with Forrestiere.

"I think," continued Alma, "that it will never be considered necessary — or even desirable — for religious leaders of

our earth to send religious missions to the Venusians. The Venusians know about Jesus Christ. And they are a very religious people. I would say they *were* 'Christian.' They have, of course, their own conception of God, that of a loving Creator, and their names for the deity and for the divine Christ.

"Their word for God is '*Am.*' The name of this continent, *Ammon,* really means *The Continent of Am,* or *God's Country.*"

Angela heard Alma using the name of God in her own language, and she smiled warmly, but let Alma continue without interrupting her.

"The revelation of Christ's reality," said Alma, "of His birth on some planet other than their own, the story of His life among the inhabitants of that planet and of His teachings there, and of His faithfulness even unto death — all this the Venusians have come to know."

Alma hesitated. She ceased speaking.

Then, after a little, in tremulous and awe-struck words, she resumed.

"You see," she continued, "Christ's sacrifice was not made by Him on their planet. But it had significance for all the universe. It does seem right, doesn't it, that Christ should be glorified in all parts of the universe, by *all* its inhabitants?

"I can hardly understand it," said Alma reverently; "but Angela says that Christ long, long ago appeared, again and again, to certain saintly Venusians. There had been, and still was, He told them, great tribulation in that world where He had lived with its human inhabitants in a physical body, and had shared with them all their human experience, including shame and physical death. However, in it all, He told them, He had overcome the world. And so," continued Alma, "all this, the story of The Christ, the story of His resurrection and of His return to His completely divine companionship with God, is a story which is the possession of the people of Venus. They revere him as Son of God and as rightfully the Master of their lives."

Just here the Venusian woman spoke a few words, slowly and repeating them for better understanding, to Alma. Thus

prompted, Alma then went on to explain that inspired Venusian writers had recorded these appearances of The Christ and that these writings were a part of the sacred scriptures of the Venusians.

"Our gracious companion here," she said, "tells me that The Christ, during His appearances to those Venusians who had come most intensely and loyally to love and trust Him, and who therefore had been able to understand the significance of what He said, told them many things. He revealed to them how He had indeed come a second time to the planet where physical death had been visited upon Him, how He had visited, individually and in groups, with those who had shared His life and work there."

On such occasions, Angela had told Alma, He had instructed His followers on that planet not too distant from their own Venusian world, how to live and how to reveal and interpret His teachings to all the peoples and nations on that planet, and how to be witnesses to Him and to their knowledge of Him, in times to come.

"Had the Venusians been told," asked Austin, "which planet of the solar system it was, on which Christ lived and taught and died and arose from the physical death?"

"I don't think so," answered Alma. "But the people of that planet, whichever it was, they understood, were led to expect His coming again, yet a third time, in like manner as His followers and devotees had seen Him go into the heavens."

The Venusians had been taught, said Alma, that in that other world this Son of God already lived in the hearts and lives of millions of its inhabitants; but that the people of that world were not, in sufficient numbers, yet prepared, in the quality of their faith or the manner of their life, for any such third return of their Master and Lord in the physical plane — as an individual — dramatically — into their midst.

After the luncheon Commissioner Forrestiere and Angela showed the visitors many small rooms located around the sides of the sanctuary, which could be entered from within it, each one with a door leading outside to the summit of the mountain. The inner door opened of its own accord as the

party approached one of these rooms. Forrestiere explained that these were rooms into which Venusians withdrew to commune uninterruptedly with their God *and with their loved ones who had become "changed" yet who lived on, in changed and celestial bodies.* These rooms reminded Alma of the family chapel in the Forrestiere home.

In each such room of meditation and spiritual communion there was a couch; there were chairs also, invitingly comfortable. On a wall in one of them was a richly wrought symbol of The Cross of *Christus Nimus,* Son of *Am;* and here and there, on other walls, suitably framed and softly illuminated, were suns and planets and satellites, nebulae and far-off universes.

The space travelers were told that as Venusians waited, meditated, and prayed in these small rooms in the Cathedral, they were often able to receive visits from, to see and talk with their transformed loved ones. This experience, they declared, depended in part upon their own faith. The Venusian woman, Angela, had studied and memorized much of the language work in which Wolcott and his party had helped her at the University of Ammoinka; and at this point she was able to tell them, in their own language, that with *Am* ("whom," she said, "you call *God*") all things were possible.

Angela also explained that after complete surrender to the Spirit of *Am,* Venusians were able, easily and naturally, to see and talk with their loved ones who had passed on, and quite as readily in their own homes or elsewhere, as in any specially holy place such as in these "rooms of visitation" at the Cathedral.

She further amazed the five by saying that some living Venusians of outstanding spiritual nature possessed the power of consciously being in the outermost points of the universe at will. This ability, she said, however, was one possessed only by a few Venusians who had reached exceptionally high levels of spiritual attainment. While in this state of being, time, for them, was no more, other than as recollection and anticipation. Such Venusian individuals were revered as truly matured in the Spirit, as Sons of *Am.*

"What would they be," exclaimed Alma — "half mortal, half on the order of angels?"

And during their descent from the Cathedral Whitney, who had been very quiet, suddenly said to his companions, "I'll bet you all feel as I do. For one thing *you* want to know and *I* want to know the secret of perpetual youth Venusians seem to have. Youthfulness and — at least in spirit and actual experience —transmutation! Why do we never see a Venusian with visible signs of old age? Why is there neither burial nor cremation? They speak only of 'The Change.' What is this? Why have we never found, in Venusian libraries, or in Venusian speech or conversation, any words or references to anything like death or dying? Always, only, 'The Change'."

Then turning impulsively to Forrestiere, who was sitting with Angela a little apart from the five, Whitney exclaimed, "You once said to me, 'We don't grow old any more, you know, we Venusians; we mature, but we're always young — right up to "The Change," our men folks and our women.' Can you explain to us now the mystery of the essential nature of you Venusians, and of your individual survival after 'The Change'?"

"I would say," Forrestiere answered, "that when the will to continue to live on, in a Venusian body, is gone, then comes 'The Change.' Life for us goes on in another sphere or state of being, in the case of each individual Venusian who has passed through that change. In just what special abode — just where in the physical universe, in so far as what is physical enters into it all — we Venusians ourselves do not know. But we do know that our Venusian bodies at the time of 'The Change' simply cease to exist, in a natural way, as simply as snow disappears in the sunshine. We have, of course, no burial places in our Venusian world. Yet we do have memorial halls, and memorial gardens."

Whitney nodded and smiled. "Yes, that must be — that *is* the answer! A world of beings that know only life, the daring and the fun of living. One world nearer Paradise."

When the members of the expedition returned to their quarters at the University of Ammoinka, they rested until

dinner time, and watched telecasts from all over Venus. That is, all except Whitney, who slipped away for a visit with Illinda. That evening Alma told Wolcott the few further facts she had thus far discovered concerning the history of religion in Venus.

According to Alma's informants, *Justin* was a saintly Venusian scholar, a chaplain in the ancient court of the *Jus* dynasty in Ammon. In the course of time he came to be regarded as the greatest of their prophets, and to be accepted as the symbol of unselfish love. The peoples of all Venusian countries, he taught, were the children of the one God *Am,* Creator of the universe. The *Book of Justin* is one of their sacred scriptures.

Before the days of Justin there had been no revelation, on Venus, of the story of The Christ, the son of God, or of his divine mission, sacrifice, and victory over death on a distant planet. It was to Justin that this truth was first revealed by an Archangel sent for this purpose by the Creator.

An immortal Venusian artist has pictured this angelic messenger against a black background, that of the unbroken darkness of empty universal space. He appears as a creature of light, with commanding eyes and with right hand extended high in a gesture such as one might make in the act of delivering tidings of momentous import.

In the language of Ammon the name of the Son of God as announced by the Archangel was understood by them to be *Christus Nimus.* The Venusian word *Nimus* was derived, said Alma, from an ancient Venusian word, *nim,* meaning *master, lord,* and by acquired usage, *elder son.* The name of the continent of Nimern has religious significance. To Venusians the name means the *Continent of Christus Nimus, Son of Am.*

God is conceived by the Venusians as being the Great Spirit of supreme and creative goodness throughout the conscious universe; and the spirit of God (or the Holy Spirit) is more specifically called, Alma had learned, in the language of Ammon, *Am Ma.* In the speech of Ammon, *ma* denotes *action.* Material religious symbols in Venusian religion are few, apart from the Venusian Cross.

"Well," remarked Wolcott, "you've certainly picked up a lot of Venusian religious tradition. Your story about the Angel — does it make you think — ?"

"Yes it does," broke in Alma, "about the appearances of old — well, the 'angel Gabriel'."

As Wolcott and Alma concluded their chat they agreed that one discovery had impressed them all — the fact that, out there in the universe more than twenty-five millions of miles from the earth, just as on the earth so also in Venus, one day out of every seven Venusian days was being set aside as a special day for rest, relaxation, and spiritual fellowship. While they had not been able to understand the words of Venusian clergymen in worship services, they would never forget the devout spirit of the Venusians; and they would always remember the appeal and power of invisible Venusian choirs as a part of such services. The word of God was being proclaimed and interpreted, based upon the sacred writings of the Venusians; that they could see. Venusian churches were places of communion and prayer; that, unforgettably, they could feel.

Wolcott had talked with Alma until late that evening, mostly by themselves, before the fireplace in the parlor of the university guest house in which the five were lodged. The day had been a hard one. The trip to the corrective institution in the city and their tour of the Cathedral of the Clouds had tired them all. And they were all taking very seriously both their studies at the university and their observations of Venusian life, from one day's end to the next.

Not all their days were as strenuous as this one, for which they were grateful. And they now and again went back to the peaceful Forrestiere home for rest and quiet periods of relaxation with Erla and Maya.

At last their stay in Ammoinka drew to a close. They felt they had learned and seen a great deal of Venusian life and customs in that important center. They were now ready to start on their cruise to other parts of the Venusian globe. They were scheduled to go first to Carpen Ara, capital city of the country of Nimern on the southern coast of the continent of the same name.

CHAPTER X

The Venusian Maiden

It was in connection with the departure from Ammoinka that Whitney caused both irritation and amusement to the rest of the party by being so much interested in the Venusian maiden, Illinda Lomia, that he failed to show up on the boat at the hour of sailing.

Wolcott and Austin searched in vain for Whitney for some time. Finally, Er Lomia, who was one of the official escorts of the group, remembered that Whitney had been at his home earlier in the day, with Illinda; he suggested that they look for him there.

The searchers found the two, at last, in a little grove on her father's land, where she had been showing him some flowering plants, beneath the trees, which were new to him. He was interested in them, to be sure, as a biologist. But he was much more interested in the girl at his side. He had been seeing her as often as possible recently, and enjoying her company more and more. At times she seemed to him like a goddess, but the rounded lines of her breasts were suggestive not of the cold pride of some Olympian deity but of the warmth and sweetness of creature kindness. Perhaps it was his idealization of her. However that might be, day and night the vision of her had been with him. Whitney was indeed mightily smitten with his love for this Venusian girl.

At the time, the two were nestled in the shelter of a great rock overlooking the part of the estate near the house. Whitney was telling her, as well as he could, of a distant world, of its nature and its life — of its men and their occupations, of its women — she had asked him about its women — and their interests. How did the women of Earth look, and dress? Were they all like Mrs. Field? Were they happy? Were they beautiful? And—

It was at this point that the lovers were interrupted by the arrival of Wolcott and Austin.

When the men — Wolcott, Austin, and Whitney — had gone, Illinda Lomia, beautiful Venus maiden of tender years,

continued to sit gazing raptly out over the city's distant skyline, out over the water. When, finally, a long white Ammonite vessel moved across the harbor, she watched — and watched — until it was gone.

Still she looked out to sea. The sky and the water seemed to recede, and into her vision came again the form of a man who had descended out of that sky and was sitting at her feet. She could see him there, broad of shoulder, almost Venusian in form, fully Venusian in the gentleness of his word and manner, more than Venusian in the masculine alertness and quickness of his motion and feeling.

She could hear him again, speaking with necessary care the simplest words of her own tongue. "Yes," he was saying, "there are on the earth many women who are beautiful. But" —

And then, as if her whole body remembered, she recalled his words. They had been so softly spoken, yet with quiet intensity, as they had come from his lips. How warmly and brightly had his gray eyes lighted and shone! They had been moist, as with tears. Could he have been at once both glad and sad? And how vital had been the magnetic presence, the nearness, of this handsome, deeply tanned stranger from the skies who was, by some miracle, no stranger at all — whose laughter rang so true and mingled, without intrusion, with hers!

But he had been serious again, she remembered, when he spoke those words she could not forget. What could they mean? — *"Thynyze arlyke thalytes uv paradyze!"*

The strange language had been incomprehensible to her. But had not the unconscious gentleness of his voice interpreted what he had said? Had not his very face spoken and the tensely whispered quality of his voice uttered that which is understandable in all languages, and beyond the stars?

Yes . . . she did understand. Out of the skies from a distant world he — her celestial lover — had come to her. He had brought her the earth's brightest and warmest gem — the priceless jewel of love. What its meaning could be, in her life and in his, she did not know. However, this she knew,

that she was happy in his friendship and in his love. What kind of being was he? It hardly mattered, for there *was* an affinity between them. In heart and spirit the Creator had made the people of Earth and the people of Venus closely kindred.

Long after the slender white line of the distant ship had disappeared over the horizon, the beautiful Illinda still looked out over the sea. Finally she descended from her rocky outlook. Graceful, silent, wide-eyed, she made her way slowly back to the house. She sighed . . . the single, deep sigh of a Venusian maiden stirred for the first time by a vision which held her in its spell, enraptured till body and soul almost ached; yet she was held by it not unwillingly. She was troubled, to be sure; but, remembering, she was happy.

At last, with one more look at the distant, gleaming line of water and sky, she quickened her pace; she began to hum a quick-moving little Venusian song; and, happily thinking of plans for the remainder of the day, she went inside.

Wolcott lectured Whitney when the latter was finally alone with him in the cabin which they shared aboard the *Sea Arrow of Ammon.* Whitney took it quietly. Wolcott was not disposed to blame his companion too much for causing the party some anxiety over the departure. He had become increasingly interested as he had observed the unique friendship growing rapidly more intimate between Whitney and this Venusian girl. He wondered what might come of it.

However, as head of the Expedition, he felt compelled to chide Whitney a bit. He reminded Whitney of his responsibility to the officials who had arranged the schedule for them all.

Later that night, as Wolcott was going through the pages of a notebook Whitney was keeping, containing records of studies made and life observed in the city of Ammoinka, he came across a piece of paper slipped in between the pages. It had but a few lines. Whitney was above at the time, but the book of notes was something that Whitney had shared freely with Wolcott, and so he started to read with no consciousness

of intruding on private grounds. And once started he was so intrigued that he proceeded to the end. But the slip of paper was not what he had first supposed it to be! This was no scientific description of Venusian studies! Description it was, however, of quite another kind! . . .

"Illinda's eyes are lights in Paradise,
Her soft warm lips the taste of Paradise,
Her breasts two hills Elysian, fair and high,
Proud summits bearing, crowned and glorified.

"Her voice is my clear call to Paradise,
Her sighing but the shadow of a cloud;
Her laughter is the clearing after rain,
And bursting forth of flowers in Paradise.

"Illinda's thoughts are love and gaiety,
Her heart is playful, yet is ever true;
Her spirit is my angel, in whose sway
Are past and present, future, all in all,
My Paradise, my Love, my Paradise!"

Wolcott slipped the verses back into the notebook again, and went up on deck.

CHAPTER XI

Sailing the Green Sea

The sun had set, but the western Venusian skies were radiant. They glowed with rich reds and yellows, deeper and stronger than any colors Wolcott had seen on earth. It was a sight to enrapture any human being yet Wolcott was not too much moved, just now, by all this. Not because he was insensitive to beauty. He would remember this celestial scene forever. He had been disturbed, however, by Whitney's interplanetary love affair, which had added fresh poignancy to his own unsatisfied emotional life.

For Wolcott had not forgotten a face and a form and a gentle voice back there on the earth—those of a girl still waiting there, he hoped—far beyond and above these skies—back there in the world that was once *their* world. Everything about her had made an indelible imprint upon him. And so now as he looked into the flaming Venusian skies, rapidly deepening and growing darker, he longed for the earth again—longed for those eyes—those lips—the companionship once more—of Marion d'Amicis of Denver. He had met her in Rio de Janiero. And to him now she seemed not only all the world, but "all this and Heaven, too," including the realms of Venus.

He leaned against the rail, his face now turned up toward the Venusian evening skies, now down toward the racing waters of the Green Sea south of Ammon, and he saw visions far beyond those skies and waters. Past became present, and he saw again that deep and darkening cut in the mountainous coast of South America where, lying within its hills, a beautiful bay reposed like a giant lake beneath its guardian, partly wooded, rock-topped and towering slopes.

And down there on the earth in his envisioned memory, on that other night in that other world as it had continued to deepen and darken the harbor, a girl had nestled again close beside him, a girl who, to him, was still the personification and embodiment of beauty.

There were millions of phosphorescent little creatures in this Venusian Green Sea, and they glowed like masses of liquid gold in the water as the *Arrow of Ammon,* moving rapidly under the power of its silent radiokinetic motors, ploughed through the rippling surface. Wolcott marvelled. Then again the Venusian night seemed to change. The sea and its shining creatures became again the darkening waters of the Bay of Rio with the myriad encircling lights of a great city enfringing it and reflected in its watery depths. Then he saw neither the creatures of light in this Venusian sea nor the memoried lights of the earthly city, but only those beautiful, dark hazel eyes; and as he stood there on the deck, his longing for her—for Marion d'Amicis—reached out and away, from his heart to hers, across the cosmic spaces—faster than light, independent of time.

"Wolcott!" The voice was in the deep, ringing tones of Whitney, who had approached unnoticed by the other.

Whitney laid a hand on Wolcott's shoulder, reminding him of an appointment for a conference with him and Alma Field in the ship's library, concerning their notes on the history of the Venusian people.

They went inside and joined Alma. The three then took up for discussion some of the things they had thus far learned about the past, in Venus. Wolcott began:

"Officials of the government of Ammon, and professors of Ammonite and Nimernite universities," he said, "have given me considerable help as to Venusian history. They tell me that there were two separate periods on Venus in each of which a race of intelligent beings emerged closely comparable to present Venusians — and to us human beings of the earth. Both times this happened in Brazia, the elongated third continent.

"The first race became extinct without ever emigrating from Brazia. However, some ancient relics convinced Venusian scholars that it was a warlike race. Weapons and fortifications have been frequently discovered, they say, in that continental cradle of Venusian civilization.

"At a later period on Venus, according to our friend Forrestiere, a wiser race emerged. This race, or civilization, was never warlike. It produced a flourishing culture all along the eastern half of the south coast of Brazia.

"After centuries of Venusian time there were waves of migratory groups eastward, across the Straits of the West to Nimern. At still later periods some of these groups pushed still further on, across the narrow Isthmus of Ai, into the Continent of Ammon, and settled there.

"Thus the people of both Ammon and Nimern had common origin in remote Brazia. But Nimern, they say, represents even today a more ancient type than that of Ammon. It is more conservative respecting ancient customs and traditions. In Nimern they still look back more tenaciously and more reverently to their ancestors. In Ammon they look ahead more daringly to the transformations of social evolution and to those of the radiokinetic age. It was the Ammonite Venusians who discovered the principle of radiokinetic energy and power — which by us is called atomic, or nuclear, power."

Whitney had been reclining in a long, low, lounging chair, and listening. Now he spoke about some biological differences which, he said, they should expect to notice in the next port.

"Physically there is not a great difference," he said, "between the Venusians of Ammon and those of Nimern, today. But the Ammonite people, perhaps because of a more rigorous climate which tends to keep them indoors and encourages city living, are lighter skinned. Common to all Venusians are the typical Venusian eyes — large, lustrous, somewhat deeply set, penetrating but kindly — dark, more often than not. However, as we have seen in the Forrestiere household and elsewhere, there are some Venusians whose eyes are blue or even lighter, and whose hair is light in color. These latter are mostly found in Ammon."

Of keener concern to the explorers than the history or anthropology of the Venusians, were their present-day social practices. Apart from their occasional duogamous marriages, the question of divorce among Venusians came up. "Divorces,"

said Alma, "seem to be very few in Ammon. In the first place, marriage is a spiritual matter essentially. Likewise divorce is a matter calling for a spiritual approach."

"But what," Wolcott asked Alma, "does Commissioner Forrestiere say about how a divorce is brought about if a Venusian desires it?"

"Well," replied Alma, "for a Venusian wife it is very simple. If she is intolerably unhappy about the continuation of her marriage, she first consults confidentially with her own chosen spiritual counselor. There are, by the way, many Venusian women in the ministry of religion. The wife may, of course, choose to take counsel with one of these. If she requests it, after this sort of confessional, her spiritual counselor will give her a statement that she has talked over her problems with him, or her, as the case may be. She may then present this statement, as a kind of certificate of findings, to a recorder who checks as received but does not copy or keep the statement, or make any public record of its contents. And the wife will later receive a certificate of permissive and conditional terms of separation, including a statement of her future responsibilities in the case of children. And thereupon, in case she goes through with it, she resumes her single status, without publicity. Alimony is non-existent on Venus.

"Queer, but that's that, according to the Venusian Commissioner," concluded Alma.

"But what about a male Venusian who finds his marriage unsatisfying or intolerable?" persisted Wolcott.

Alma replied that a professor of sociology had told her that it was somewhat more difficult for a Venusian husband to separate from or be divorced from his Venusian wife, but that the method of procedure was the same. However, the husband must talk over the circumstances not only with a spiritual advisor but also with a Venusian psychiatrist named by the wife.

"Alma," said Wolcott, "you just said that alimony does not exist in cases of marital separations. Right.

"But remember, if your information is the same as mine, when a Venusian marries, he sets apart one-half of all his

assets and makes them over, right then and there, to his bride. Also, if later in life he wishes to take another wife, he may do so only if, along with the other requirements, he has assets sufficient to enable him to give to her at that time, an estate sufficient to yield her an income for her support in case 'The Change' should come to him during her lifetime, to continue to be paid her, in that case, while she remains single. And if such marriage had resulted in a child or children, a part of the Venusian's estate must also go to that wife for child care and education. These are matters of Venusian law."

"No wonder, after all, there are so few duogamous families in Venus," exclaimed Whitney. *"C'est la payola* — or something — *c'est pour les riches!"*

Alma said that Commissioner Forrestiere had told her that these permissive divorces were rare, and that in cases of mental illness (very seldom encountered in Venusian life) the well partner always remained responsible for the happiness and care of the other. Another marriage, however, according to the circumstances of the individual case, might be allowed.

Further, according to the Commissioner, Venusian parents regardless of their marital status, are jointly responsible according to their means, for the support of minor children. And a Venusian woman who has terminated a marriage, is as free as a widow would be except for that share of responsibility for support of children she has borne as may be rightfully hers. She is always free to seek a happier alliance. Incidentally, the Commissioner had explained, while children are sometimes born outside of marriage, no Venusian child is called or even considered illegitimate. Such offspring legally comes into the heritage and estate of the parents, whatever their marital status, married or single, may be.

Finally, according to statements made by the Commissioner, there were very few broken marriages in the course of a year, in all of Venus. And in most of these instances the terminating of the marital relationship came about by mutual consent, because both husband and wife united in requesting it. Wolcott summed up the discussion on divorce with this

discerning comment: "The continuing of the mutual love life *within* marriage," he said, "seems to be the supreme concern of Venusians, rather than the mere preservation of marriage itself."

Whitney, since his brief remark about racial differences on Venus, had been sitting silently buried within himself across the table from Alma, apparently hearing little, dreamily remembering . . . But now he came back into the conversation, as Wolcott finished.

"I once asked Forrestiere," he said, "why a Venusian, if he wanted to marry again, should stop with the second marriage. Why not, well, more? Or free love?

" 'No,' Forrestiere had replied, 'not within our system of family organization.' And he smiled a rueful smile. 'That would, with us, make for unnecessary complications. Inheritance. Other reasons. As a matter of fact,' he added, 'even the duogamous marriage has never been general in Ammon, and at no time have more than three per cent of its families been other than monogamous. But we will *not* be *compelled* in any such matter'."

Whitney recalled a statement by Forrestiere to the effect that the people of Venus had at one time, about ten years before that, been visited briefly by a party from outer space — "the Other Planet" he called it. "I think," said Whitney, "it may have been the planet Mars. And at that time the Martians, or whoever they were, left the impression in Venus that they, the Martians, had no permanently structured family relationships. To Forrestiere that was repulsive. Forrestiere remarked to me at the time that it would take a world peopled exclusively with divinely perfect individuals to make a success of a society with no definitely set family pattern, no marriage or giving in marriage."

The collaborators finally pinned together their reports thus far completed, and adjourned.

The three joined Austin and Field in the ship's luxurious drawing-room. There for some minutes they relaxed and listened to broadcasts from Ammoinka. The ship was now about two-thirds of the distance between Ammoinka and

Carpen Ara, due south of the Isthmus of Ai, thus named because in the language of the Venusians this designation meant the Land of the Gateway.

After a little while Whitney turned the dial and there flashed upon the television screen the picture of an international athletic contest. It was a game something akin, apparently, to the American game of football.

It would be another day or two before the vessel would arrive at Carpen Ara. The voyage was making the travelers sleepy. Outside it was very dark. The sea was smooth, but torrential rains were descending. The *Arrow of Ammon* moved forward slowly and silently, cautiously. She threw ahead of her the powerful beams of her searchlight, in the rays of which the falling drops shone and sparkled.

Through the blackness of the night and storm the Ammonite captain steered the vessel over the watery lanes familiar to him, through the seemingly uncharted darkness. His passengers retired and prepared to sleep.

Before settling into the snugness and comfortable warmth of his berth, Wolcott withdrew from his bag the photograph of a young woman, that of the girl — to him the one girl — back there on the earth. In the darkly arched eyes and about the delicate lips there was the suggestion of vivacious fun, yet the expression of a tender sweetness of spirit. From the finely moulded Latin chin to the abundant hair clustering about a well shaped head there was poise, yet the poise of expectancy. The throat and shoulders were such as might have been seen in the Garden of Solomon.

Wolcott placed the picture beside his bed, and turned off his light. But the face and the feeling it engendered were still with him, and when he shut his eyes he could see her more clearly than ever. Her face was sometimes smiling, sometimes serious; and she held his soul in her smile. And then he was asleep.

Whitney retired wondering about Nimern. What particular variety of Venusian life would be revealed in that country? Its men? Its women? But his last thought before he slept was the framing of a radiogram. He was

mentally composing it — a message to the Venusian maiden who lived in the little town outside Ammoinka. He could see her as she received it — those questioning eyes — her hair, her . . . But Whitney also slept. He slept deeply.

Alma Field felt herself being drawn closer into her husband's arms. She relaxed all through her being, in thankful contentment; and so she fell asleep in the arms of Henry Field. Millions of miles from Earth, speeding through Venusian seas black and deep, she also slept the sleep of peace. The hand of her husband was upon hers; their fingers intertwined. And in the safety and the sweetness of his love the world that had been was no longer needful. Venus, too, and Mars, and all the universe, might dissolve and pass away. Love still watched over sleep, for them both.

It had been a quiet, uneventful day, surrounded by very lovely marine color and beauty on the water and in the Venusian skies, to be sure, but unexciting, except to Austin. He had found mystery, and experienced mounting interest, in his attempts to understand some features of the ship's power plant. But he, too, was glad to call it a day.

CHAPTER XII

Nearing Carpen Ara

Next morning dawned in Venusian splendor. Wolcott and Whitney came in reluctantly from their early morning promenade about the decks in the sunlit, warmly bracing air. They seated themselves at their well appointed breakfast table. Wolcott and Whitney were much together these days.

Small tables had been placed along the sides of the dining room opposite large windows of clear thick glass. Rich curtains, golden brown, of lace-like texture, were drawn back by flounces of similar material.

The two men had chosen a window on the side of the ship, from which they looked out upon the waters racing by in the sunlight, and out to the far horizon to the south. From the nearer waters flying fish of many hues sprang into the air and darted gleaming alongside the ship, then disappeared again into the liquid green and remained hidden beneath the shining and ever changing surface.

The Fields presently entered. Austin also made his appearance, and the three found a table next beyond that at which Wolcott and Whitney were seated.

Delicious Venusian fruit, in size and taste like the grapefruit, was served. Its skin was of a deep orange color. This, Whitney was saying, was probably caused by the quality of the solar rays on Venus.

The two tables were quite close. And now that all in the party were well settled at breakfast they began to talk about their coming stay of a few days at Carpen Ara on the south coast of Nimern. Alma Field started to say something about the Nimernite city:

"Carpen Arr—r . . . !"

She got no further. She screamed. She sprang back and she and the chair ended a rearward movement against the wall. All was confusion for a moment. The men had risen, startled but at first uncomprehending.

Alma had first seen the beast. It was a weird looking thing that came rushing, pounding, and slipping along the

floor, from somewhere in the rear of the vessel. Its feet were like a pig's, on a body like that of a pig. But it was monkey-headed! Ears and nose were too much — altogether too much — like stunted and deformed human members. Apparently it was a fat monkey on all fours, but an animal with no hairy coat and with a yellowish-white skin!

Venusians — they were members of the crew — pursued the creature to the further end of the dining hall. It escaped through an open door, which was then hastily closed behind it.

There was no danger of its getting in again, but breakfast was not resumed for some minutes. Explanations were quickly and apologetically offered by a ship's officer.

He told them that the Venusians eat very sparingly of meat, but that they had provided as a part of the dinner menu for their honored passengers something considered by them a delicacy. This was the meat of the *jai*. They had brought aboard a live jai as part of the ship's supplies. It had been trapped in the wilderness of western Brazia, its natural habitat, and had been shipped on board at Ammoinka. Fresh *jai* meat had been planned for the evening meal that day, but the animal had escaped from the hold.

Jai was *not* brought to the tables that day! And when it was actually served up, later in the course of the voyage, it was not specifically named on the bill of fare. Therefore, in ignorance of what it was, all thoroughly enjoyed it!

The encounter with this queer animal made the five Americans realize that they were indeed in a different world. It left them nervous for a good part of the morning. Finally Wolcott suggested that they all get together once more to recount to one another what they had been told, and had observed, concerning aspects of Venusian life not yet summarized but made known to them in Ammon.

Thus once again they assembled.

Alma Field had a supplementary report concerning Venusian religion. She had been told that they would find a form of established church in Nimern. However, she could speak more definitely about organized religion in Ammon.

"In Ammon," she said, "Church and State are separate; but the Venusians there consider them closely related institutions, both essential. They have seen that separation of Church and State does not mean that either the Church or the State is, or can be, disregarded by the other. They feel that the one is vital to the well-being of the other. They have observed in a cool scientific spirit that religion is not one thing, and the conduct of affairs another thing that can be isolated from and unrelated to religion.

"In fact, they hold in Ammon that while separate church bodies should not attempt to function directly in government, real religion, which the Church symbolizes, is rightfully the guide of those who carry on the affairs of State. In all departments of government in Ammon the chaplain is an important personage and an advisory official of the state, especially in both the legislative and the executive departments. The legislative chaplain, for instance, may officially propose new legislation; and in certain types of legislation, he must approve proposed measures before they may be put to a vote".

Alma continued:

"The Venusians enjoy an unqualified recognition of individual religious liberty. They recognize the dignity and the rights of all forms of organized religion among them. And in keeping with this principle the government of Ammon has built chapels, churches, and a Cathedral. It maintains them but has nothing to do with the religious use of these buildings. All religious societies may use these houses of worship and of religious instruction. Major religious groups share largely in their use, although they may also build and maintain their own separate churches.

"Incidentally," Alma added, "although there do exist at least several large bodies and conferences within the planet-wide framework of organized religion in this Venusian world of some three billion souls, no one of them disagrees with any of the others in doctrine. There seems to be nothing, in Venus, of the nature of a religion divided by denominationalism, as in our world."

"No," she said, in answer to a question by Austin, "there is on Venus no one official head of the Venusian churches,

Commissioner Forrestiere says. In the opinion of Venusians no created being — no Venusian — is considered to be worthy of speaking or acting in the name of *Am* or of His Son *Christus Nimus,* without fault or error. To Venusians the one and only head of the Church is *Am,* whose Son, *Christus,* and whose saintly prophets from one age to another have spoken, as the Venusians believe, in the revelation of His love and of His will concerning them. Venusians would not welcome the arrival of any missionary representative of any particular communion, so many of which we have in our world, whether from a hierarchical body or not, who claimed for himself or for his particular church any exclusive or unique authority from God."

Alma realized she had been talking a long time.

"Sometime," she said, "I want to learn more about the 'United Churches of Venus.' That is the name of a planet-wide federal union of all individual churches and church conferences. Its delegates meet regularly at the Cathedral of the Clouds in Ammoinka once in every two Venusian years."

At this point hot drinks were served to the conferees. Just what they were the travelers did not know; but they were very welcome, and refreshing.

"I am about through for this time," said Alma, putting down her cup. "There is just one other thing about the Vensians which shows how high they rate religion. All lawyers, physicians, teachers, and others in advanced professional courses in Ammon must complete a required course in religion and in its ethics, before receiving their professional degrees."

With Alma's report concluded, the conference broke up, and all the party went to prepare for a swim in the pool, a capacious white-tiled one with lights set into the bottom and sides, illuminating the water and rippling its surface with tiny shafts of light when disturbed.

Later in the day Whitney handed in a report to Wolcott which contained some surprising information about criminology among the Venusians of Ammon. It was written out by him in full. Some of it was as follows:

"Venusians have no *penal* system. They have a *corrective* system they call *'Enchad en Jdura'* (or Department of Personal Adjustments). The problem of good and evil has been worked out from far back in Venusian beginnings. The Venusians seem never to have developed individual selfishness as it exists on the earth. Yet they are happier. They never had to have a crucifixion or other martyrdom of one good Venusian to reveal to them their own wickedness and to bring them back to the vision of personal and enduring goodness. The Spirit of *Am,* the Creator (as Christians might express it, the Spirit of God which was in Christ) descended long ago upon Venus. This spirit is in the Venusian character, and in their mores. In that spirit they live and in it they have built their cultures.

"Because of that vision and spirit in the lives of unnumbered leaders among them, Venusians have accomplished much that has not been achieved on the earth, either individually or socially. The spirit of the people of Ammon, certainly, seems to be both more enlightened and more 'Christian' than that which still weighs down and slows down human relationships on the earth, cursing them with various 'penal' laws and penalties.

"Venusians have built nothing called or regarded by them as prisons. Persons convicted of infractions of Venusian law are never sentenced by Venusian judges or courts of law. Judges determine only whether such infraction has been committed.

"If a Venusian is convicted of such infraction he is removed from further consideration by judge or court. He is then out of their jurisdiction. The authorities turn over his case to three Venusians qualified in psychiatry, abnormal psychology, and social problems or facts. These three-member boards of behavior specialists are selected as follows: one of the members holds office by governmental authority; the second is appointed as chosen by the convicted Venusian himself, but without cost to him; the third member is named by the first and second members acting in agreement as to the choice, and must be a Venusian woman. Decisions as to treatment (which in rare cases may include surgery) and as

to continuance or discontinuance of custodial care, must ordinarily be unanimous. There are no determinate sentences. 'Treatment,' as they call it, is tentative, never final, and may be modified from time to time, or terminated by the board, at its own discretion . . . "

"By the way," said Wolcott to Whitney, "this Commissioner Forrestiere told me yesterday that on the Continent of Ammon there had not been a murder — what did he call it? — voluntary or deliberate homicide, as we would translate it — not a criminal killing of one Venusian by another, for generations. That's not humanly possible, is it?"

"Well," replied Whitney, "Venusians are Venusians. They seem to have developed beyond the point to which we have attained in our social behavior and treatment of others. The real proof of the spiritual superiority of Venusians is not in any power over their bodies — transmutation — not in any power to become materialized again in body after 'The Change,' or anything like that; the real proof that in the Venusian the spiritual is supreme, is the marvellous way they live and treat one another even in their natural state of physical existence, day after day, throughout the course of their ordinary lives. And even their rare and isolated cases of anti-social behavior are dealt with successfully — by treatment, instruction, perhaps surgery — or naturally terminated during surgery by 'The Change' into that next and completely spiritual level both beyond our human existence on the earth and beyond the physical life of the Venusians on their planet."

After Wolcott had skimmed through Whitney's report, the two men discussed some of the points touched upon.

"Sometimes", Whitney said, "but very rarely, detention and custodial treatment may last for life. But no 'life' sentences are ever pronounced; and there is no 'capital punishment' on Venus. The various periods of detention in a corrective institution are always subject to re-consideration and modification by the all-powerful board of examiners. The mere serving of time, say the Venusians, never undid a criminal act, or remedied a crime, whether trivial or tragic. The necessary length of 'imprisonment' as we call it — that is, of

custody and treatment, — takes into consideration a great deal more than the overt act; on Venus no penalty is imposed as punishment for an act, but rather as isolation and quarantine and correctional treatment of a bad actor."

What had interested the tourists from the earth most of all when they visited the national institution in Ammoinka, was what they found out about its management. When an inmate there has served half of the time his treatment is currently expected to require, and has reacted favorably, he usually has much freedom. The rooms are like those of Venusian homes. He receives visitors, and remains alone with them. He corresponds freely with his folks. This normal type of life, say the Venusians, is very important if an abnormal individual is to be transformed into a normal citizen.

"And I was informed", said Whitney, "that even while still remaining a patient or inmate there, he may be employed outside, if he is a suitable case, in work obtained for him. He thus begins again to make his own way in society, — in itself, Venusian psychiatrists say, a valuable part of the treatment."

It was a pleasant voyage to Carpen Ara, from this point on.

The travelers might almost have believed they had never left the earth. There was only the intense brightness of the morning sun and the heavy volume of the afternoon downpour of rain to remind them that they were pilgrims of the sky.

Whitney had sent his radiogram to Illinda. Not even the onrush of the *jai* at breakfast could make him forget that. He sent it immediately after that morning meal. And he had a reply handed him, sent from Ammoinka, before dinner that night.

And so that was another day. They expected to land at Carpen Ara the following afternoon. The next day was destined, however, to give Wolcott and his companions a travel experience unforeseen and unheard of, even by the mechanically-minded Austin.

CHAPTER XIII

Whitney and the Telenavolt

When the members of the party awoke on the following morning, they found themselves unable at first to believe their senses.

Wolcott had noticed, even before daylight, that the ship was uncannily silent. There was no swish of water against her sides. There was no feeling of motion. But he took it that they had reached port and were lying at the pier, somewhat ahead of schedule. And so he returned to sleep for a while longer.

But when at last he arose and looked from his cabin window, he involuntarily grasped the sill. They had not reached Carpen Ara. They were not in port. Instead, they were up high in the air — perhaps a hundred feet above the heavy seas! And they were moving forward through the thick Venusian atmosphere — voyaging on through the air instead of across the turmoil of the sea below.

Wolcott called Whitney. They hastily dressed, awaked the other three, and rushed to find Er Jens or a ship's officer for an explanation, and for reassurance!

The simple fact was that a violent sea had arisen during the night, and the captain of the *Arrow of Ammon* had done that which is common practice under such conditions in the radiokinetic age there in Venus. He had used the levitating possibilities of his radiokinetic power and the gyrostatic controls to lift the ship above the raging waters and continue on through the air, at somewhat increased speed.

Upon further thought, Austin realized that there was nothing unbelievable or miraculous about this accomplishment. Had not he and his friends travelled in much the same manner in their own *Radiokin*?

Later he found the captain, with whom he had an enlightening conversation. He learned why the Venusians had not developed much air travel, although they had been using

the radiokinetic principle for some years. It was the frequent thickness of the atmosphere, with its temporarily impenetrable cloud banks which often hung low, which had discouraged their relying on that mode of travel. This was also probably the reason why the expedition from the earth to Venus had gotten ahead of any similar expedition from Venus to the earth. Frequent poor visibility over most of the planet had had the effect of causing the Venusians to limit their attention mainly to the perfecting of travel on the surface of their planet. The coming of the *Radiokin*, however, had been a very stimulating and challenging event, and it was already common talk on Venus that an expedition would soon be made by them, in an attempt to reach the earth.

Before evening of this day the *Arrow of Ammon* rested alongside the pier at Carpen Ara. There was nothing especially outstanding in what happened during the party's stay there, as they continually added to their knowledge of life on the Lustrous Planet. They continued to use their comfortable quarters on the ship, going ashore every day for further observations. They found the people of Nimern friendly and cooperative. Not only were the visitors feted more than once at public receptions in Carpen Ara, but they were taken on several trips through the surrounding countryside, and to smaller towns and villages.

Wolcott was particularly interested in learning more about the governmental set-up on Venus. He made inquiries about the jungle-filled continental country of Brazia, on the other side of the planet from Ammon and Nimern, and learned that they would probably make no extended stay there, but just cruise along the northern shore, on the return trip to Ammoinka. He found out that Brazia, while represented in the Federation of Venus, played only a minor part there.

The Federation of Venus did some of its official business, he learned, at Ammoinka, and some of it at Carpen Ara. There were international commissions which acted as advisory bodies, whose findings were given from time to time to the Congress of Delegates meeting now in Ammoinka, now in Carpen Ara.

The Congress met every other year, but the commissions were in constant operation. There were commissions on health, public welfare, trade and industry, communications, education, and agriculture. On Venus there had never been such a thing as a tariff for revenue. The principle of free trade had always been adhered to throughout the planet, in order that industry might thrive not only in one or two countries, but all over the Venusian globe.

"I have been amazed at the signs of industrial prosperity everywhere," remarked Wolcott to Austin, as the two walked down Carpen Ara's principal avenue of retail stores after visiting, with him and Forrestiere, a large furniture manufacturing plant on the outskirts. "Maybe this international cooperation in business and government partly explains it."

Austin had no opinion on this. He was no student of such matters.

Forrestiere had told them, however, that Venusians had realized for hunderds of years that their industrial prosperity rested upon "three legs," its labor, its capital, and its management. Every leg, said the Commissioner, must be kept sound, and firmly planted in an all-Venusian economy. Thus, he said, they had been able to develop a very satisfactory and very stable worker-producer-consumer society.

These considerations of Venusian governments and economic relationships, however, did not make Whitney forget an important item on his personal agenda. It was on the afternoon of the second day at Carpen Ara that he went into a Nimern amusement hall. He found there all kinds of mechanical surprises and marvels, among which was the *telenavolt.*

Whitney found himself in a large hall some sixty feet long and thirty wide. The roof was high, with mezzanine galleries about the sides, Yet it was not in its size, but rather in its fittings, that it was remarkable. The interior walls were concealed by cleverly wrought artificial foliage — laden branches, abundant and lace-like — and by real mosses and living plants. Through the leaves yellow sunlight seemed

to filter down here and there upon grass-green carpeting. Whitney explored several smaller areas set off from the main floor, fitted with illuminated windows. One window scene, in colored glass, was that of an island, verdant and lambent and set in the midst of a sunny sea; and on the shore, looking out over the waters, stood a maiden who would have been called beautiful either upon the earth or on Venus.

Whitney's was a soul appreciative of beauty, but just now he looked only fleetingly at the pictured window. For he was always remembering the eyes and the smile of Illinda, his beautiful Venusian friend. Finally he saw, down at the further end of the booth-like recess, what he had been anxiously looking for ever since he had entered the building. Even at a distance he glimpsed it, built-in by itself, a bit out of the concourse — a *telenavolt* available for the use of visitors there.

This invention perfected by the Venusians enables an operator, Whitney had learned, to focus upon the screen before him almost any selected field of vision, unless it be specially shielded. Both light and sound within the field selected could be recorded and then transmitted great distances. Powerful telenavoltic broadcasting stations existed in every great Venusian city, twenty-five in all on Venus. Whitney had been told that they utilized a ray capable of passing through miles of water and of soil, rock, or other solid materials, and freely through the air.

Homes could be protected against these inquisitive rays, according to the desire of the builders and owners of residential structures, room by room or throughout the building as a whole. Public entertainment halls and hotels, and almost all residences were telenavolt-proofed. In all the civilized countries homes must be so protected, for the sake of proper privacy. Yet anyone owning or operating a telenavolt apparatus and receiving set could do wonderful things with his dials.

The user of a telenavolt first tunes into the distant focusing station. Then he can — as Whitney now intended to do — selectively use the focusing power and energy of one of

these stations in any given direction from it and to any distance from it up to approximately a thousand miles. He would need to know only the charted point desired, the name of its station exchange, and be able to dial the distance from the exchange to the point he seeks to reach and call. Subscribers to this service were listed in published telenavolt directories.

The control apparatus of the set which Whitney was about to use was equipped with a larger screen of some three feet in height by about five feet horizontally, and with a smaller screen of only some twelve by fifteen inches. The larger screen could be switched on for the entertainment and convenience of two or three persons. The little screen, set for close-up observation, gave one more privacy. It was used by those who preferred it, such as in communicating with a business associate, an intimate personal friend or member of his family. The little screen was Whitney's choice. He switched it to the "on" position.

Whitney sat down. He cupped his face in his left hand while he fingered the dials with his right. Slowly, painfully, he had been reading the instructions printed both in Nimern and in Ammonite languages, near the controls.

Upon his knee lay a radiogram. It was date-lined Ammoinka. Translated into English it read:

> Focusing station V. F. 2, Ammoinka through station V. F. 3, Carpen Ara. Directional degree 195.3. Distance, miles 6.254. 7 p. m. Ammoinka time. Message received.
>
> Illinda Lomia

This was the reply from Illinda, received by him as an answer to his earlier radiogram to her, and handed to him aboard the *Arrow of Ammon.*

Whitney tuned into the V.F. 2 — V.F. 3 hook-up. He dialed around to direction 195 point 3. He was now nerv-

ously trying to accomplish what to him was the most difficult of all the necessary adjustments — the focusing distance of 6 point 254. He reached jerkily for his Venusian timepiece. It revealed the hour of four in the afternoon — which corresponded, in Carpen Ara, to seven at Ammoinka — there was a difference in solar time between the two places, of three hours. Back to the focusing dial went his fingers. In his concentrated effort, they trembled. Carefully, ever so slowly, he made vernier settings. Finally he slowly pushed and pulled back and forth a clarifier rod. Then — he straightened involuntarily.

"Illinda!" Impetuously, excitedly, he spoke to her. Now more quietly, tensely, he repeated her name, tremblingly resonant as it came from his lips: "Illinda!"

There she stood, framed in the doorway of her home at the edge of what were most certainly the Lomia gardens. One more anxious touch of the clarifier and the somewhat blurred lines became sharp. Now through the medium of this wonderful Venusian invention — and in response to Whitney's earnest request in his radiogram of the day before — Illinda was revealed coming down the steps.

Slow, modest, were her footsteps, yet purposeful, and indicative of a state of mind, — if not one of excitement, at least of genuine pleasure and of unhesitating willingness to keep a tryst.

What followed would be a strange experience to man or maiden upon the earth. Whitney could see Illinda walking down through the gardens and going directly to the rocky shelter where she and he had talked. Two thousand miles away on the distant continent at Carpen Ara, in the obscurity and retirement of the dimly lighted telenavolt alcove, Whitney was breathlessly following her progress, his hand moving ever so slightly from time to time to readjust the clarifier. Thus he kept her moving image in sharp outline.

Not once, just yet, did he think of speech with her. He had forgotten that this could be. His lips were parted in amazement with the revelation of this unbelievable wonder he was experiencing; and his thoughts and the framing of

words were inhibited by the pounding of his heart and by the powerful stirring of something more moving and personal than wonderment.

However, when Illinda finally reached the rock and he saw her seating herself where they had sat and visited together, he again involuntarily breathed her name. Without realizing it he leaned closer to the brightly screened likeness of her, a miniature, but so realistically life-like that it seemed she herself must be there before him. Once more he whispered her name, "Illinda!"

More than ever he wanted desperately to talk *with* her, to hear *her* voice! Then he noticed for the first time (for the image of Illinda had been his only concern) the container of suitcase size she had been carrying, which now was resting beside her on the ledge. It was her portable telenavolt transmitter and receiver. She had known, he realized, from his radiogram to her, that he would be using the telenavolt service at this station in Carpen Ara. She had looked up its listing, and had previously adjusted her portable telenavolt to its listed focus. He should have guessed that it would be a two-way connection!

She now fingered the dials. And of a sudden a close-up of her face appeared on the screen before Whitney. This brought release of the inhibition in him.

"Illinda!" He spoke aloud this time. He was no longer self-conscious. He had no thought of himself — only of her.

Then, wonder on wonder! At the sound of her name, Whitney saw that her face lighted up.

"O Illinda!" he said again. It was the way he used the words rather than the words themselves, that could indeed have been enough to touch the innermost heart of a maiden, whether on the earth or out among the stars, under Venusian skies.

Even as he spoke, his heart stood still. For he saw that at his words she quickly lowered her eyes. As quickly she raised them again, looking intently into her telenavolt. Now she seemed to be looking at him directly, face to face, fully and freely. And in her eyes and from her moving lips there came a response:

"Mr. David!"

"Mr. David! Dear Mr. David!" This was the way she had come to address him.

Whitney gasped and trembled inwardly with excitement and emotion, and tried to speak again. He realized that she had indeed heard the fond tones of his exclamation, had felt the spiritual caress of his words as he had spoken her name, and that she had responded to him. But his speech failed, he was unable to continue; for something seemed to be happening.

Whitney first noticed that Illinda suddenly started forward as she turned again toward her receiver and its screen — she had briefly turned her face away from it — toward the sea — toward Nimern — toward him.

Now he was startled because Illinda seemed to be really disturbed, as if she were seeing something new on the screen of the receiver in front of her, something she had not anticipated or wanted, or as if she had been caught by unexpected circumstance or agitated by some unexpected sound.

It *was* a sound. But only after a second or two did the sound penetrate to Whitney's consciousness although it was very close to him.

Someone behind him, whose presence he had not noticed, had uttered a sharp expression of surprise. The sound was like that of the voice of a male Venusian, coughing or exclaiming; *and the sound originated from right behind him in the telenavoltaire,* as the Venusians called any room in which accommodations had been provided for telenavoltic transmission and reception.

Whitney looked around, — to see Illinda's father!

Whitney had not realized that it was customary for patrons of the telenavolt service to shut themselves into the communication booth or room. In the excitement of his anticipation of talking with Illinda, he had not closed the door. He was not easily noticeable from the entrance, however, and was bent forward in the depth of his chair and close to the small screen. By coincidence, apparently, Illinda's father, one of the official escorts with the explorers, had come in for some purpose of his own; and while the Venusian stood

there, he had beheld the image of his daughter on the receiving screen above Whitney's shoulders, heard Whitney speak her name, and noticed Illinda's heightened color, seen love in her eyes. Small wonder that a Venusian exclamation — and a rare one with most cultured Venusians! — escaped the Ammonite father! Both the mature Venusian and the young man from the earth had suddenly become much disturbed.

"La - la - la - Illinda!" stammered Whitney. Faint words from white lips . . . Sounds that were meaningless, both to him and to the Venusian. Words — or, rather, sounds — that came up from queer feelings in Whitney's stomach. Yes, Whitney was scared.

"Bl - a - a - ah - Bl - ub!" The Venusian was also sounding off. Likewise in no real language of his own. In sounds that were red! From a reddened Venusian face! From tense lips!

Exactly how the Venusian felt, Whitney had no way of knowing; he just could not get through the language barrier. He finally faced Er Lomia, struggling vainly to think of some fitting word. While, however, he was trying to find some Venusian expression that would be appropriate and explanatory, the Ammonite father withdrew, disappeared from the premises, almost as if apologizing for the interruption. When Whitney turned to the telenavolt again, he found the connection was broken. Disappointed and frustrated, he quit the telenavoltaire.

Whitney was very quiet that evening. He started to confide in Wolcott, but the latter looked across at him . . . He had heard all about it, he told him.

Wolcott himself was unusually serious. For a while he was silent. A sigh, as of one pondering responsibilities, escaped him. Night had come on. Wolcott looked out through the cabin window. No moon, of course, on Venus. Yet, for a wonder, there were no clouds in the local skies, and countless starry worlds shone down. Wolcott breathed hard and looked long at a bright yellow body, larger than the stars, over near where the sun had set at day's end. He knew it!

The Earth! Home! Return? He glanced at the timepiece on his wrist, remembering the initialed lettering on its back — "M. d'A. to J. W." Would he *never* be free from his everlasting longing and need — at times all but unendurable — for Marion D'Amicis? Or would that longing — somehow, some time — be satisfied?

Impulsively he sprang to his feet: "Tomorrow we must confer about our plans for the future!"

The words came almost cuttingly, urgent!

"We cannot stay longer here on this planet. We've got to get back to the world where we belong. To America! To Radiokinburg! God!"

Then he went out and paced the deck.

Had Wolcott determined to cut short their stay on Venus? His impulsive remarks in the cabin had been the first of the kind which he had made in Whitney's hearing.

CHAPTER XIV

Return and Tragedy

Next day the five space travelers met for another conference aboard the Venusian ship.

Wolcott sat at the upper end of a table in the captain's cabin. Mr. and Mrs. Field sat at Wolcott's right, and Whitney opposite them. Austin sat at the further end.

"We are far from having learned all we wish to know about many things in this planet," Wolcott was saying. "Take, for example, such details as the distribution and supply of raw materials, and the organization of transportation, all that makes possible the amazing mass production in Venusian industry. Take, again, the extent of Venusian neurosurgery in correctional cases — the laws that govern private property, and taxes — and many other matters we have wanted to learn. But we can leave these things for a second visit here."

Austin was leaning on the table, elbows on it and hands propped against the sides of his swarthy face. He looked toward Wolcott.

"*I* think," he said, with evident concern, "that we should get back to Ammoinka and prepare for our return to the earth. *I* want to get back to the *Radiokin*, at any rate. I've a feeling that you folks should have left me with the ship at the Forrestiere estate."

Following this conference, and after much discussion among the five, and finally after another meeting, it was decided by Wolcott and his companions to return to the earth, if possible, as soon as the tour was over.

They completed the voyage up through the Straits of the West, and westward along the north coast of Brazia through the North Sea; they finally descended southward by way of the Straits of the East and into the Green Sea, and arrived at Ammoinka safely. They had been gone some two months of time as reckoned on Earth, and had sailed around the globe of Venus.

"We shall always remember our passage through the waters of the North Sea, off the coast of Brazia," declared Alma Field, "for there we beheld, for the first time, Venusian icebergs in the distance to the north of our shipping lane."

They had already learned that even here on Venus real winter was to be found along the northern coasts of all three continents, for a short period each year.

In fact, at a sporting goods store back in Carpen Ara, Forrestiere's brother Jens had picked up a pair of skiis made by some firm on the North Coast, skiis such as Nimernite natives use and enjoy during their brief but snowy winters. The Venusian got them to bring back as a gift for his brother Yan's son.

From that time on, they were busy making preparations to negotiate the return through the solar skies, to the earth. The people of Ammon were cooperative. The party was given valuable records. It was also given pictures of Venusian life and institutions, and messages of friendship for the inhabitants of the earth.

In these last days on Venus certain momentous decisions were made.

Wolcott and Austin had suspected that Mr. and Mrs. Field might wish to yield, with Wolcott's permission, to the urging of the Venusians to stay on their planet, there to await a second expedition from the earth. Field was eager to carry somewhat further his study of the Sun's rays, and to do other astronomical work and much in meteorology, on Venus; and Mrs. Field was willing to remain with him that he might do this, notwithstanding a new element in her situation. She announced that she was pregnant. And the Fields were willing to have their baby arrive while they were on Venus. It would be the first child of earth-born parents to be born on any other planet! They knew, of course, that something might happen on this return voyage; but they trusted to Wolcott, with Austin's help, to be able to come back for them. Wolcott and Austin would not really need the services of their astronomer for safe piloting, since these two would have the celestial charts used by them on the outward trip, and now tested, checked, and proved reliable.

Then Whitney did the unexpected. *He* would also stay, he announced, if he could be spared. "Would it be possible for Austin and you," he asked Wolcott, "to make the return trip without me? I could not help much in the navigating of the *Radiokin,* and I would like to study the biology of Venus somewhat further."

Wolcott knew that Whitney's real concern was Illinda, the Venusian girl — not research! Partly because of this, he had definitely intended to take him back. "But," he reflected, looking at Whitney, "for a fellow of your temperament, perhaps that would be a catastrophe. You might never again have peace of mind, even though worlds away from her. All your life — until and unless you could return to her — you would perhaps be living in heaviness of heart, consciously or otherwise — with that longing of yours — repressed, perhaps, but there — longing for a Venusian paradise you might think you had lost."

And so Wolcott agreed to leave Whitney with the Fields.

Thus it was that Wolcott and Austin made ready to come back to the earth unaccompanied by the others. The plan for a Venusian to come with them was not to be carried out, after all, this time, since a return trip was contemplated; and the Venusian Er Forrestiere felt it would be better that Wolcott and Austin should report their exploration first to the people of their world, then make public beforehand their second ascent to Venus and let the people of Earth understand that besides Whitney and the Fields they might also bring back on their second return a representative citizen of the Venusian country of Ammon.

The distinguished Venusian, Er Yan Forrestiere, with all his household and some one hundred guests, many of them official, were assembled, the day of the return ascent from Venus.

The Commissioner was in his formal dress — with helmet of purple instead of the usual dun or somewhat lighter color, trimmed by a narrow light-colored band and edging of sunny saffron. His coat was short and form-fitting, with

waistcoat of lighter material; the trousers were long, white, with a fine green line down the sides. On his fingers were jeweled rings, including a wedding ring that signified his marriage to Erres Erla; and about the wrist of the same hand he wore a golden bracelet, which was the sign and symbol of his marriage to Erres Maya.

Mrs. Field especially was much interested in the jewels and called them to the attention of the other members of the expedition.

"Look," she whispered to her husband and Whitney, and she indicated Er Yan's hands as he carried past them a tray laden with Venusian refreshments; "that is the Venusian custom."

Finally the moment of ascent on the *Radiokin's* return trip to earth arrived. Wolcott was to function as pilot, as he had functioned on the outward trip; only now he felt more confidence in the performance of the ship, and in himself at the controls as a relief to Austin.

Yet, the return was to be marked by tragedy in the case of the one, and by miraculous escape in the case of the other.

Wolcott and Field had worked out all necessary calculations. Wolcott and Austin were full of confidence. The expedition had been a year and a half on the planet of Venus when the two took off, amid the salvos of the Venusians, and departed into the interplanetary spaces bound for their home port — for Radiokinburg on the Dakota prairie, U. S. A., the Earth.

All did go well with the ship out among the stars and the planets. All went well with both intrepid travelers until — until finally they saw again, with naked eyes, and near, the earth's great orb — welcome yet awesome sight — looming up from below them.

Then it happened! Austin suddenly lurched, and dropped from his seat — dead!

Austin had been occupying his position at the instrument panel at the time. He was apparently in the best of health and spirits and had been joking in his somewhat clumsy

fashion. He and Wolcott had been looking down at the huge expanse of brownish, grayish, greenish, and hazy terra firma and great watery expanses now filling half the sky.

The earth had begun to look less like a planetary sphere, and more like a great flat mass stretching away in every direction and ending indistinctly beyond the line of vision. Wolcott had become too awe-struck for speech; but Austin, true to his less impressionable temperament, had given utterance to a bit of whimsical humor: "And now," he said, "I suppose that when folks go to Venus and come back to the earth again, some of them will still prefer Florida to either Ammon or Nimern." That was the last thing he had said.

He had chuckled quietly, and it was then that he had slumped down, without warning, unconscious, beyond Wolcott's ability to revive him.

Just before all this happened, Wolcott had been giving some directions to Austin as the latter was handling the controls, and had been asking Austin something about one of them. Although he had relieved Austin so many times, he was not as familiar with the operation of the ship as Austin had been.

As Austin had fallen from his seat, his hand had dragged and his sleeve had caught upon a lever which connected with the steering mechanism of the ship. The weight of his body had been sufficient as it forced down this lever, to cause something, some mechanical part below the floor of the cabin, to part, or jam. And now Wolcott found himself helpless to change the direction of the movement, or the descent, of the *Radiokin.*

Under these circumstances the *Radiokin,* with its pilot no longer able to control it, continued to descend, unchecked and unguided, until it finally settled upon the Atlantic Ocean instead of upon land, never to arrive again at its moorings on the Dakota prairie.

Wolcott had tried to stop the globular craft, by the most desperate efforts, a few hundred feet above the water, hoping to hover there until seen by a vessel and taken in tow. But despite his utmost exertions he was horrified to find the ship

continuing to sink, slowly but persistently. Something more serious than an injury to the steering apparatus must have happened.

Now Wolcott tried to think quickly. The body of Austin lay before him on the pilot's bunk where he had laid it. Must he leave the remains of his friend there, to sink into the ocean depths? If he waited aboard he saw only death for himself, sealed within the ball-shaped craft and magnetically held upon the ocean floor. He looked out over the empty waters.

"Marion!" he said, hoarsely, tensely, yet softly; and his thought carried him swiftly across the distant horizon of water, to Rio . . . and then to the Rocky Mountain city that was her home. Hers! Marion D'Amicis! "Marion!"

He felt for a photograph — the photograph he had kept buttoned closely over his heart. It was there!

He had not asked her to go with him on this hazardous venture into the void. He had loved her too truly for that. He had not asked her to marry him, either, in the face of the odds against his ever returning.

Wolcott had refused himself even the comfort of a last-minute farewell glimpse of her, but he had sent her a tribute, a message of yearning, trying not to express the agony of it. In it he had spoken of his love, but with repressed and measured words — with many things left unsaid. He had felt he had no right, in the face of his perilous undertaking, to say more or do more. If he returned, he would seek her. This he had always known. This she had understood.

Much more had he always known. It was Marion D'Amicis — and he knew it — who had nerved and inspired him to dare to seek to measure up to the challenge, as he had felt it, of this interstellar undertaking, from its first inception in his mind and through it all, even to the unknown risk of life necessarily to be accepted in this the first of all interplanetary voyaging.

Now he was back, back on earth again! Though helpless.

"Marion! I have come! I have returned! I love you . . . *Darling!"* he breathed.

And instantly, with the words, the sweetness of her presence seemed to be with him. He knew, somehow, that

she was still waiting, somewhere beyond this desolate ocean waste, not indifferent to his fate — still loving him — and waiting for word from him — waiting, waiting. Again his arm seemed to rest upon the curve of her shoulder, to encircle her slender body as, in his fancy, they walked together once more under the moonlight. And in his fancy he saw her again with that never-to-be-forgotten flush in her cheeks and the shining tenderness in her eyes.

He resolved to live. He was determined to survive!

Gently he laid upon Austin's breast the honorable insignia the Venusians had given him. Regretfully he took one last, long look at his friend's dark, calm face. Reverently he covered the body with a rich shawl brought from Ammoinka. Then . . .

Wolcott had scarcely time to don a life-suit and to unloose a raft from the side of the *Radiokin,* which was by that time riding the waves, but still slowly sinking. He had no time to save the many valuable gifts and records which he was bringing from Venus back to earth. He did, however, preserve the written material compiled by Whitney and by Alma Field.

"It's a good thing," Wolcott heard himself saying, "that no Venusian came back with us on this trip, after all." And he hastened to make exit from the ship.

The *Radiokin,* in a matter of minutes, descended into the ocean depths.

CHAPTER XV

"Whither Thou Goest"

The descent and submergence of the *Radiokin* had taken place somewhat south of the most traveled lanes of ocean liners. It was the miracle of the return from Venus, therefore, that, some hours later, Wolcott was rescued from the raft by members of the crew of a large passenger ship which had come up over the eastern horizon.

For a day Whitney spoke little. The officials of the ship, one of a French line, a vessel making for New York, learned from him only that the man they had saved was a wrecked "aviator" who had come from the United States, flying his own ship. That meant nothing to the French officer, who, however, remembered the story of Lindbergh.

On the day following that on which Wolcott had been picked up by the captain of *La Belle Sicilienne,* Wolcott sent a radiogram to Marion D'Amicis, paying for it in United States paper money he had taken to Venus and back and had managed to tuck into a pocket of the shirt he was wearing when he abandoned the *Radiokin.*

After that he slept much.

At New York Wolcott contrived to escape from view before the question of his registration had been checked; not, however, before some embarrassing encounters with newsmen who had learned of a rescue at sea. He registered at a downtown hotel, as John Smith, of a Denver address. He kept to himself, mostly in his room. More than once he reached for the 'phone — Denver — Marion! With difficulty he resisted the temptation. He must not be traced. His story, for the present, must be kept a secret. Yet, how thankful he was that he was finally again in Marion's world, and in his own beloved United States!

It was late afternoon, about ten days after the rescue of Wolcott by the French captain.

The day was all but spent out there on the prairie at "Radiokinburg", as the explorers had named the secluded

spot, with its shack and its circular platform in the coulee nearby, from which the voyage of the astronauts into the skies had begun.

The front of the shack, or cabin, was illuminated now by the setting sun, off there in the west, past irregular badlands beyond the Missouri. The nearer plain in that direction and the higher ground beyond were bare of snow, that November day. The air was characteristically dry and clear.

Presently out of the silence and along a rolling rise in the prairie behind the cabin, came the sound of a motor. The noise came from the approach of a ranch wagon. And now . . . yes, none other than Wolcott himself could be seen, driving the machine.

Before his Venusian explorations began, Wolcott had left the vehicle at a service station in Garrison, conditioned for long storage for which he had paid in advance, with orders for annual renewal of registration.

He drove around the corner of the cabin now, and got out.

The same Wolcott, — yet a different man! Where before the voyage he had looked like thirty, tonight he looked older, and drawn. The same wide-set gray eyes, but of a darker gray — the eyes of one who had seen more than their owner could describe!

Yet, much of his former confidence, even poise, remained. The difference seemed to lie chiefly in a strained brightness, and a suggestion of repression and sternness in and about the eyes and in new lines of seriousness about the mouth.

Wolcott went immediately to the cabin door and entered a short corridor resembling a narrow storm porch. He unlocked an inner door and entered the large single room within.

Once in the room, Wolcott opened shutters which covered the windows inside. He lighted a fire in the fireplace, — a wide, deep affair of brick and stone at the south end of the room. From a wall cupboard he took a dinner plate and other ware, and put them on a sizable table centrally set in the

room, after brushing off the bare table top to remove a quantity of accumulated dust. He produced canned tuna fish and a can of sliced pineapple. A trip to his car yielded lemons and bread and butter. Then with a pail in his hand he went out to the well.

"Hello there!"

Wolcott had set down the pail, and had his hand on the pump handle when he heard himself thus accosted. The voice was friendly and hearty.

Turning, Wolcott saw a man of medium height and build, wearing a short sheep-lined coat, a muskrat cap, and corduroys. He carried a gallon can.

"If you please", asked the stranger, "could I get a little water?" He had left his car back along the main trail, he said, while on his way from Garrison to Elbowoods, and had followed the fresh tracks of Wolcott's station wagon, hoping to find a ranch or cabin nearby, for his engine was getting hot.

"Sure", replied Wolcott; "help yourself".

And that, briefly, was how Wolcott met McFee, a newspaperman enroute West, who was on a special assignment to the Fort Berthold Reservation to get the current story on how the Ree, Mandan, and Gros Ventre Indians still up in that country were going to be affected by the proposed flooding of a part of their lands by a vast government project that would dam the Missouri further downstream.

Preparing to fill his can, the visitor took off his coat, and in doing so, revealed a jeweled fraternity pin on his vest. Wolcott noticed it because he himself was a member of that fratrnity.

"You're a Delt?" This from Wolcott.

"Yes".

"Well, so am I. From Gamma Zeta at Wesleyan", said Wolcott.

This was the beginning of a conversation that became an overnight visit and developed into an interview that lasted through the hours of the next day until evening.

At first, however, after eating they just relaxed in the warm glow of the fire, after McFee had filled his radiator and brought his car alongside Wolcott's. McFee noticed many books on astronomical subjects, on shelves to the left of the fireplace, and glanced at a few. Between the pages of one of them he came across a carbon copy of a report that had been left there, perhaps forgotten. The book was entitled "The Transits of Venus".

To McFee's perplexed amazement he discovered that the memorandum described preparations for a voyage to Venus, and ended with the statement that such an expedition left that very spot on April 15, 1949!

"What does this mean?" he asked.

Wolcott replied, "I'm too tired to talk more tonight. In the morning I'll tell you a story!"

Next day Wolcott frankly told McFee who he was, and revealed to him in bold outline, but strictly off the record, the story of the adventure of the five into outer space. And he promised that later—some months later it was, in fact—he would meet with McFee again, with records he had not brought to the cabin, including Whitney's notebook and Mrs. Field's reports; and he would tell him the whole story of the trip. He gave him permission to use the story then as he saw fit.

But McFee did not use the story journalistically, when Wolcott finally narrated the details of the expedition and showed him the records, for—"No one would believe it," he told the Pilot.

Their talk consumed most of the day, until at length the sun was again low over the prairie. Wolcott went into the cabin for a moment, while McFee loaded his car, for he was going on to the Reservation that evening. He was about packed up, and now he was sitting at the side of his car, lacing a shoe and humming what sounded like a nursery tune. Presently he broke into words,—probably lines from a popular song:

"An ugly frog sat staring,
An ugly frog sat on a log,

An ugly frog sat staring,
And leaped upon the deck,—
Tra-la, Tra-la,—
A visitor from the bog".

McFee was singing into the sunset. On the last line he turned his face slightly to the right, and stopped his singing abruptly. A girl!

"A pretty little song. Sorry to interrupt".

Then more seriously, "Don't call Mr. Wolcott, please. I want to surprise him." And she laid a dainty finger on her lips.

She gave a quiet little laugh, as if she were quite at ease in his presence and unafraid of anything in this lonesome prairie setting. Clad in a soft brown shirt of some closely woven material, and in riding breeches, and wearing a close-fitting brown felt hat, she regarded McFee briefly with amused interest. Her delicately molded lips were slightly parted. She stood still for an instant, as if pondering what to do next.

McFee had risen. He just stood there like a surprised school boy, noting the exquisite poise of her head, the lithe and regal perfection of her figure.

It seemed to McFee that there was something familiar about the face of this young woman. Then suddenly he recognized her as the girl in the picture which he had seen Wolcott take from his billfold and place on his desk in the cabin. In the photograph she was dressed for skiing, but he could tell that it was the same person, even tho she was now dressed so differently.

She had stopped smiling. Color was rapidly mounting in her cheeks. The soft outlines of her mouth also changed, betraying tender excitement constrained by an overpowering quiet as she stood listening to a footstep within the cabin.

McFee looked in the direction of the sound. In the doorway stood Wolcott; McFee had not seen him looking like this — pale, his lips apart, his eyes ablaze.

"*Marion!*" It was something between a groan and an expression of unexpected joy — *so* unexpected as to be painful in its onrush.

"An instant, and his hands were upon her shoulders."

Down fell the packages Wolcott had been carrying. An instant, and his hands were upon her shoulders, his eyes upon her face and hair, as if he were making sure it were she.

Then ignoring and forgetting McFee — and all else — he had her in his arms, passionately close, in strong embrace. He relaxed, and embraced her again. Their lips met in long, soft caress, seeking again and again, and finding, his in hers and hers in his, the intermingled flow and warmth of life in that physical nearness — something more than bodily contact — in which soul and soul mingle and become consciously one.

Explanations followed. Wolcott's radiogram to Marion, announcing his long deferred return from Venus, had told her of his intention to go to "Radiokinburg" and he had asked her to meet him, if she received the message and could do so, at Bismarck. He had named a day for the proposed rendez-vous, which was yet, however, one day off.

She had planned it a bit differently. In her enthusiasm and loyalty, wanting to give him the happiness of a surprise, she had not stopped at Bismarck, but had come on by rail to Garrison and gotten a rider from a livery there which Wolcott had written her about, to escort her on horseback to the prairie cabin in the badlands. She had watched the cabin from a distance in the duskiness of the cottonwoods, and had seen Wolcott going in and out. She had seen McFee, too, and wondered who he could be. But what chiefly concerned her was making sure that Wolcott was at the cabin. Assured of this she had sent back her escort and the horse she had ridden out.

She was courteous to the stranger, but felt relieved when McFee set out, as he had planned to do, a few minutes later, for the main trail to Elbowoods.

At last they two — Wolcott and Marion — were alone together. Alone with the stars, the prairie and bad lands, the empty cabin! They remained out under the darkening sky as they listened to the last faint murmur of McFee's car on its way.

"I feared that I should never see you again in this world," she said, held again in the deep embrace of her lover — and unspeakable peace was hers as his arms ever more and more completely encircled her and as he ever gently and steadily took possession of her body. She laughed softly as she yielded her lips to his once more . . .

She asked him nothing about the far reaches of the universe. And — though there was much to be told — he seemed to have forgotten everything but her, and her nearness.

"Marion! *Sweetheart!*"

"Jim! *Darling!*"

These words sufficed. He felt the warmth of her love, and was content.

There came to them the silent music and the beauty of the stars — for him, octaves and tender undertones of light — living, shining into his soul from the dark splendor of her eyes, taking possession of his soul and body in every part, and resolving there into a song universal and deathless! For her, the melody of all things that exist and of all things that are yet to be, coming to her silently as if from all that is God and nature, but mediated to her through him! This was sufficient.

She looked at him and saw not simply him, but the supernal beauty and sweetness of love. She looked into his eyes — and saw in them not him alone, but herself to the end of the world, and beyond.

Presently she began to speak. His fingers, firm and caressing, now interlocked with the softness of her own, tightened ever so slightly. She was repeating the words of the message he had sent her, worlds away, just before the great renunciation of his departure from her, but not from his love of her.

The precious hours of reunion sped by all too rapidly.

The night was well advanced before Wolcott and Marion realized it. Wolcott made up sleeping facilities in the quarters above the main floor of the cabin upon a rustically balustraded platform over the north end of the big room. He himself slept before the great fireplace on the floor — when at last he slept.

When he awoke, she was already out in the sunshine. For the sun had long since risen. He found her in the coulee by the anchorage.

They ate a simple breakfast.

Now was the time, Wolcott felt, when he must tell her his plans for the future, and lay before her what he saw as his duty, to go back once more, out into the perils of the spaces beyond the skies. He dreaded telling her.

"Marion," he began, after a long silence during which she had been teasing him about his sudden seriousness. She could see that he was not being his own natural, buoyant self. Indeed, although he had not mentioned it to her, he had *not* been buoyant or natural so many times, off in that Venusian world where he had not been able even to send his messages to her except through the telepathy of his love.

He had been sitting bent forward, with his face in his hands. Now he sat up. He gave her an affectionate smile. But it was still one that was far from being carefree. He proceeded to speak — quietly, earnestly.

"Marion dearest, I love you. And I want *your* love. Yes, I know . . . I believe . . . that I have that." He spoke not in words alone. His every action spoke tenderness. He reached out and laid his hand upon hers.

"Marion my darling, I *love* you. But listen, my dear!" — and his voice became pained and almost a whisper — "I love you; but listen. I must go, once more — perhaps it will be two years from now — perhaps a longer time before we are equipped again — but it seems to be my lot to *go*. God . . . God knows I want you! I *need* you! But we must be fair with each other. How can — how — how can I ask you to — to *marry me*— knowing that as soon as the *Radiokin II* can be constructed I must go again into the sky and out beyond?"

His words had become agony, as he continued to speak:

"My duty could never kill my love for you, or take away my need of you — neither can anything, in earth or heaven or hell. Yet how can I — how could I — ask you to marry

me, Dear One? How? Only to desert you, to leave you again upon the earth while I again seek to climb past the stars to bring my comrades home?"

Marion regarded him intently; and then — suddenly — brightly — her words came — at first very softly, but in a manner not to be misunderstood.

"You're *good,* my dear! But you're rather only a boy, after all, in spite of your years, and your learning, and your terrible courage, and . . . these explorations." She was almost scolding. And it thrilled him now, this banter of hers he used so much to love. Yet he saw in it no solution of his problem, no hope for the fulfillment of his desire.

Then the real woman in her, having waited for his best efforts, came to the rescue of the man who loved her; and she ended his present pain. And in her courage there was promise of life abundant for them both. For she would take upon herself his future, too.

She faced him squarely and reached out and placed her hands firmly upon his shoulders

"Why *should* you ever desert me, James? Don't you know that *I* am going *with* you on the *Radiokin II?* 'Whither thou goest I will go.' And though there may be no returning, your life shall be my life — your world, my world!" Then without warning, without realizing it herself, Marion let her head fall forward upon Wolcott's breast. Her hands remained clinging to his shoulders, and she was quietly weeping.

At Marion's words, Wolcott seemed to forget himself entirely. The strain fell away from the gray eyes, the perplexity from the manly but tired features. Yet in his eyes, as there were in hers, tears; tears such as do have their rare moment sometimes in the drama of true love, from the realization of the existence of a love that will not and can not fail or be thwarted. For Wolcott was a man, and he knew no tears save those starting from pity or from the stirring of deep emotion, as — now — these — these released from the lifesprings of passion, of affection, of humility, and of exultation.

Thus were pledged and attested the sacredness and the fulfillment of Wolcott's innermost need, as he again took Marion into his arms; and thus also it was that Marion knew afresh the surging joy of the completeness of her own devotion.

The unpatterned badlands to the westward became, for them, clothed with beauty and meaning. Even every marking of their barren earth became revealed to them as the writing of time upon the terrestrial age of the past. Every surviving butte reached up, they could understand, to the sky.

But now they were looking not upon the earth, not upon the sky. They were looking upon one another, again into one another's eyes — again past mere understanding into the fullness of knowledge, each of the other. They were envisaging life, present and future, each through the eyes of the other. Each the other's to share.

Were these the bad lands? Or indeed was this not, for them, the Garden of Eden?

Epilogue

More than ten silent years have elapsed since the epochal flight of the *Radiokin* to Venus and back. It is a flight of which the world has known nothing till now. The mysterious Pilot described in this fantasy still comes and goes between Garrison and a secluded spot out in the North Dakota badlands.

This is a story which till now was buried in the hearts of three human beings — the young but now prematurely graying Pilot, his young wife Marion, and a journalist who has never before revealed these adventures. But now the time seems ripe to tell the tale of this pioneer expedition into outer space — an expedition literally built out of courage, imagination, and faith.

Today a still rather unenlightened world as to its personal and social standards of right and wrong, lives its days in apprehension. It still debates whether to accept, with confidence, spiritual enlightenment, or the lightning of the destructive nucleus. Some of its leaders and peoples have not even seen the light of the spirit of reconciliation. Today the world ponders whether to use nuclear energy as the Venusians here described, use it, or to explode and destroy itself with atomic and hydrogen bombs. Yet we do sometimes hopefully turn our faces upward toward the stars, as our world groans and travails and continues its struggle of centuries to better its past in battles with ignorance, evils, and unhappiness — that it may if possible give birth to a happier order.

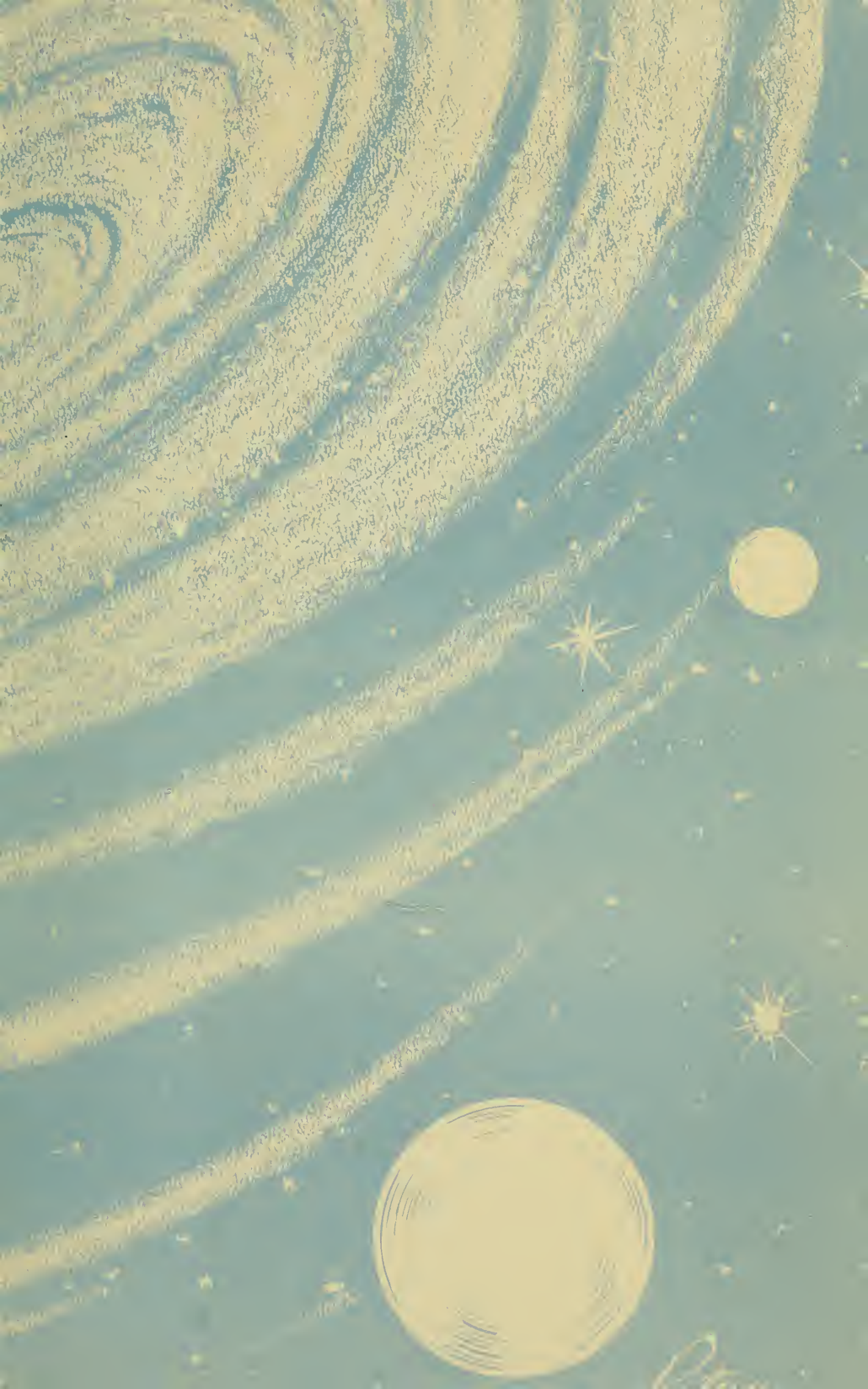
Perhaps one day in the not-too-far-away future an announcement may be made by a certain engineering and construction company located in a northwest Canadian province, of which a certain man named Wolcott, a young American, is principal owner. One can easily imagine that this announcement will be dispatched by the world press, telling again in brief outline the essentials of the story which has been told in these pages. Such a dispatch would tell of the departure of the *Radiokin II,* its destination the planet Venus, its purpose to bring back to America and to an incredulous world our friends Professor Henry Field and Mrs. Field, and Mr. Durwin Whitney, people supposedly living abroad but, according to this story, awaiting on Venus the return of Wolcott, explorer of the nearer universe and blazer of the way to the stars. Perhaps Illinda, by then Whitney's Venusian bride, will also come.

Perhaps the Venusians will ultimately join with future interstellar explorers from our own globe. Perhaps they will help us who are from the earth, to pilot a combined Earth-and-Venus expedition, not only to the other planets of our solar system, but out among the fixed stars, the suns and clustering worlds, and the nebulae of other universes.

Perhaps we and our Venusian friends shall one day together penetrate into the illimitably stupendous universe — into Shelley's "white radiance of eternity", the star-spangled skies seen but dimly by the ancients, their glorious

colors somewhat clearer by telescope, further detected and revealed by the spectroscopic eye, but then to be seen, once we are in outer space, as they really are — safely through the ubiquitous barrier of the invisible, terrible cosmic rays — and into the many mansions of this and other universes — into untellable regions and states of being, all bright, and sparkling against the pitchy blacknesses of the uninhabited and uninhabitable chaos — into the gray hues of cosmic beginnings — past worlds of coppery browns and incarnadine reds — toward and around and then far past the signalling green of countless others — along aureate golden ways and thoroughfares cosmic and seemingly endless — to and from the glowingly garnet-and-orange orbs of other worlds — suspended but moving in all directions — across unimaginably wide and bottomless seas of space — and finally near but not quite into the regions of the ever-blest, where the spiritually-bodied, angels and archangels, sing their antiphonal praises to the Creator of it all in strains that pulsate from afar — the divinely appointed music of the spheres.

At any rate, let us hope and pray that when the *Radiokin II* takes off and — as we profoundly trust — successfully returns to Earth with its brave pioneers and its precious records of Venusian life and with additional knowledge of outer space — let us hope the world will believe them and honor them. There could be much in the culture of people on Venus, as on other planets, which might with profit to us be further studied, accepted in one form or another, even improved upon, to the future health, happiness, and vitality of terrestrial life. All this could come from future embassies of good will to the Lustrous Planet, that world in the sky inhabited, according to this story, by people certainly as good as the best on this our own earth.

Even now as this story goes to print, we earthlings are exploring further and further into the outer spaces. Moscow reports that a rocketed missile was successfully sent out toward Venus, and that Yuri Gagarin returned safely from the first trip of a human being around the world in a space ship. And we have actually seen Alan B. Shepard, our own first American astronaut, take off on his epochal flight, in charge of his own controls, and return unharmed from his venture into space. But none of the vehicles used in these ventures, wonderful though they are, can be compared to the *Radiokin I*, an electronuclear, magnetically polarized, gravitationally powered craft, capable of speed approaching timelessness.

Venus